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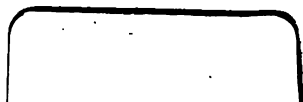


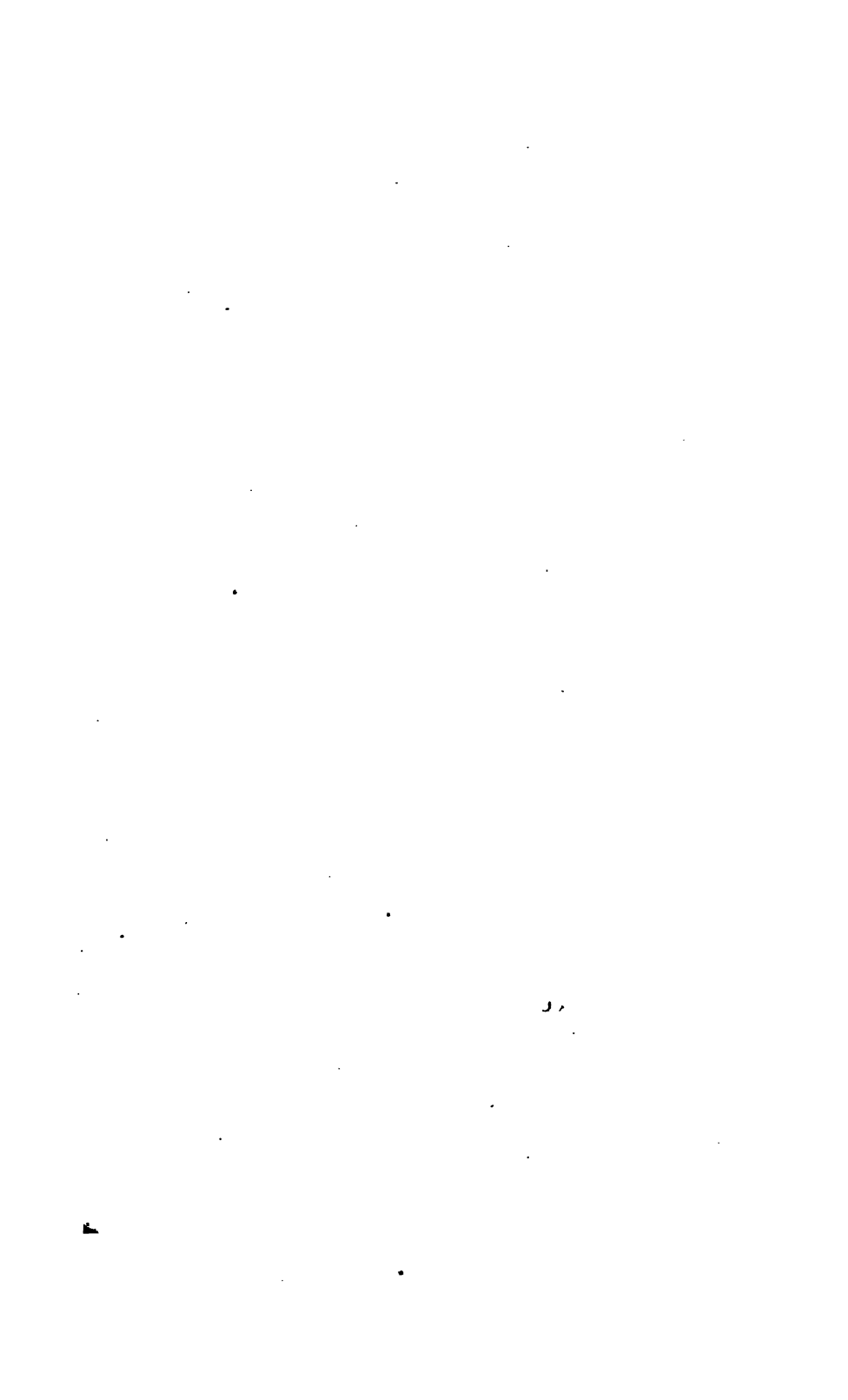


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MY VILLAGE NEIGHBOURS.

A TALE.

By Miss G. M. Sterne,

"Alas poor Yorick!"

London :

T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1859.

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MY VILLAGE NEIGHBOURS.

CHAPTER I.

The past ! the past ! I'm saddened now,
With memories of the past ;
But yet that gloom upon my brow,
I feel it will not last.

For glorious hopes, and faith's bright beam,
I do recall full well,
Which brightened many a dying bed,
And softened death's sad knell.

My first recollections, for I had dim perceptions, before this day—dim like the first faint outlines of a gone-by dream ; but my first recollections, were of a quaint old building partly covered with ivy. Its windows, and doors were of a nondescript character. Some of the former were gothic, and beautifully painted,

One of these elaborately painted windows lighted up my father's library, and was a never-failing source of amusement to me, for many years of my childhood.

How often on a bright spring morning have I sat and watched the rich colours playing on the quaint marble table; or forcing the deep shadows from their hiding places, piercing into the dim corners, or lighting up the dark rich carving of the old oak panneling. Many a grim head has glowed with fiery eyes, many a ruthless brow has shone with a golden lustre!

There were several paintings of our buried ancestors, grim, dark, and awe-inspiring!

Old warriors, and ancient dames, knights of high renown, and youthful beauties of courtly fame, hung here, their deeds of love, or war, forgotten. How have I watched the rich colourings playing on their countenances, lighting them up with expressions undefinable, but which never-

theless, oft made my spirit quail within me. There was my mother's little work table, on which stood a vase of flowers, always the freshest and most lovely, and fragrant in our garden.

This was my father's secret pleasure, that the little table she always used, should stand in the same sunny nook, decorated in the same manner, as was her custom when her presence cheered and graced that dear old room.

Often have I seen him stand, and gaze upon this little table, and low quaint chair, and raise a drooping flower, or pluck away a faded leaf, and then with a deep quivering sigh, move away to his books or writing.

I soon found that my little arms around his neck, and my warm kisses on his cheek, brought back the smile to his lip, and the calm serenity to his brow. My caresses were returned, and the softened voice called me his darling, his comfort, his

treasure! and I ran off to my play quite happy—that I had made dear papa smile.

I do not remember my mother, but she must have been very amiable, that one like my father should revere her memory so deeply.

The old people spoke of her with tender respect, the young with warm affection.

And the good young lady of the parsonage became a familiar sound to my childish heart.

How the crimson tints, and gold and purple rays, played on that vase of flowers! and changed with its flickering lights the whole aspect of the room.

It was a strange old place that parsonage!

I do not think there were two windows or doors of the same architectural design, or two rooms of the same height or size.

Stairs running here, and there, few in number, but twining and twisting, rooms

were entered by ascending two or three, others by descending, you never could be certain of the ins and the outs, at least visitors could not.

But I ! I could have found each floor and room blind-folded.

There had been frequent additions to the building, numerous armorial designs covered the walls, not only of the house, but were let into those of the garden, which started up in all sorts of odd places, where you would never have supposed walls were intended to have been built.

Heads of a woe begone character, stared at the inquisitive stranger, from every nich, where it was possible to place one.

These grim guardians of the scene, were the tyrants of my infancy.

And certainly even in my childhood, I entertained a dark awe of them—from having heard an old woman—the gossip of the village—tell to my nurse, that a certain occupier of the parsonage, one not much

respected by the villagers, had pillaged them, from the ruins of the neighbouring abbey; she also affirmed, that the pious monks, who had adorned the holy building with these offerings to its shrine, nightly surrounded the parsonage, bewailing over the desecration of their former abode.

Often when the winter storm raged and wailed amongst the old trees, and their long boughs, swept by the wind, bent down waving with a moaning sound across the walls, and windows of my home, I have shrunk! and covered my head, trembling at some undefined thought of ghostly vengeance! But never was there a pleasanter or more fruitful garden. Rambling nut walks, with borders of old-fashioned flowers, spreading their luxuriant tufts to the passing breeze.

Sunny spots where the earliest, and sweetest violets were to be found, and where the wild-wood strawberries grew most luxuriantly. Shady nooks where dwelt the

cheerful robin, who met you at every turn, with his bright inquisitive eye, or cheered you with his clear sweet song, from many a tangled bough.

One spot was my delight ! And now when I glance from my cottage window, I see its ivied wall in the distance ; a sunny terrace ! Raised from the flower garden, by a bank so mossy green and soft in winter. In spring and summer so enamelled with graceful flowerets ; and in autumn decked by its varied tints, it seemed for ever fresh and charming. A limped stream, one of the graceful beauties of merry English scenery, ran murmuring along, between this sunny terrace, and the flower garden. Two or three little rills rose beneath the bank, and trickling through the bright green moss, fell with a soft low sound into the rippling stream. At one end of the terrace grew a mighty mulberry tree, amongst the branches of which innumerable warblers filled the air with their wild melody, or dotted the green

sward with their tiny forms, as they hopped about, seeking their food in quiet security. At the other end an aged medlar spread around its tangled branches, and a pleasant contrast was its white blossoms and its dark russet leaves in the summer sun-shine.

Our garden was famous for my father's peaches, my bowers of white jessamine, and thickets of cabbage roses, of which I can assure you we were not a little proud. At the western end rose a low straggling rock, its wild and broken sides wooded both by nature and art.

The graceful ferns grew in great luxuriance, bending their bright green forms, o'er many a tuft of wild violets, harebells, primroses, wild hyacinth, stately foxgloves, and other children of the wild wood family. Up the sides of this precipitous rock, we wound our way, by steps cut out, but so well contrived, and so hidden by the wild hazel nut, and aspen quivering in the

passing breeze, that you did not perceive that your path was other than the naturally broken sides of the cliff.

From the summit burst on your view a varied scene ! Of rich surpassing loveliness. Low undulating hills with purple heath encased, wide spreading meads, rich with the dairy's pride, or harvest golden honours. I have I think admired it most, when a fine October eve has lured me on. When the soft haze hung on that lovely valley, and the sun shone full on the sparkling waters of its lake ; when its golden rays lit up the wondrous beauties of its tinted woods, and the soft lowing of its numerous herds came musically up. Borne on the breeze the jocund ploughman's call rings merrily, and his cheerful whistle sounds musically too.

Away ! to the Castle woods the cawing rooks are speeding fast, whilst their weary sentinels, winging in mazy rounds, utter their warning cries ; and as the evening closes o'er that calm valley rises the autumn

mist, spreading its pale grey mantle, fold by fold, till all is softly hid !

'Twas here I sported when a careless child, with one how dearly loved ! My only brother ! Dear George ! the kindest, gentlest, frankest friend a sister ever had. He married very young, scarcely more than twenty ; but his regiment being suddenly ordered to India, my father could not withstand our united entreaties, that he and my favourite school-companion, to whom he was engaged, should be married. Fanny Graham was the orphan niece of the Misses Butler, who kept a boarding school in the village. The school, I think I may call it the County School. Schools were not so plentiful as I hear they are in the present day.

We always returned to the parsonage together on Saturdays—a happy time we passed for George always came to fetch us.

Yes ! Saturday was a long, long day of glee ! If fine, off to the orchard, gardens,

village, everywhere. With busy feet we pattered to and fro, and the old walls rung forth their echoes to pleasant song, and childish laughter.

Where are those voices now?

They've vanished in their beauty, and the halls of their fathers know them no more! Their shadows pass over the distant hills of the east; and as soft clouds of the night, they flit amid the valleys of many waters.

Sunday was a day of quiet, solemn pleasure. No gloom marked my father's devotion; no austerity of word or look, dulled that pretty church.

How we used to enjoy that walk through the fields with our dear father—

That village churchyard! The graves so fresh and green! Not one young foot would press the low green mounds! His Reverence and Miss Maude would be so vexed. Sufficient check for them. They really were good children—those little

Moresdale urchins ! with their shining faces, smooth hair, and sparkling eyes, as they stood lining the short pathway, from the gate to the porch, all anxiously looking to catch a smile, or nod, or some such notice from his Reverence, on the fine Sundays when no chinking pattens, or dripping umbrella hurried them into church before we came.

I see now that big boy sliding behind the rest. No use ! his Reverence has stopped — his glance is on him !

Not one word is spoken, but Robert feels full well, that all is known. How could his Reverence know ? He's sure his mother never told of him ! and his honest eyes are raised brim full of tears to meet my father's look of keen reproach. 'Tis quite sufficient. They understand each other. My father nods and passes on, and the culprit follows, fully determined never to refuse to leave his play again when his poor sick mother has asked him to fetch home the brindled cow.

The mystery is soon unravelled. My father had met dame Martin the evening before driving home her cow. He had stopped to speak to her, and enquired why Robert had not gone to the field to fetch the animal. She had made some excuse, as mothers will, to hide their children's faults. But when Robert's guilty face and hasty action met my father's glance, the truth flashed on his mind, he understood the whole affair. Robert was certainly less selfish, and more attentive to his poor invalid mother from that eventful Sunday.

My neat handed Rose, who waits so kindly and tenderly upon me now that I am enfeebled by illness, is the youngest daughter of that said Robert Martin, and a treasure of a servant is my little dame Rose; but they tell me she dances blithly enough around the maypole, or at harvest homes, or Christmas nights, and I hear, too, that ours is almost the only village from which the merry maypole is not banished.

I like the good old times, and the happy grouping of the lads and lasses, the gay honest laughter, and the manly sports upon the village green. Well, I'm growing old ! but not my heart, that's bright and youthful still, and I am thankful for it.

CHAPTER II.

OUR VILLAGE CHURCH.

Aye ! Sweetly it sounds like music,
Softly, harmonious, stealing—
Weaving around the tender heart,
With some of earth's best feeling.
Our village church,

Hark ! Sweetly the bells are ringing,
Calmly, and gently pealing,
No ! no ! 'tis memory's dream alone,
Of their sweet music telling,
Our Village Church.

It is one of those simple, gray, time-worn edifices you often meet with in England's country solitudes, far from the turmoil of the city strife. It rises in a little sunny nook of the valley ; the Castle woods seem to bend their sheltering boughs almost over its churchyard walls, so many dot its intervening fields. You catch a sight of

Farmer Burton's farm and upland fields, and two or three thatched cottage roofs, and the latticed windows of widow James's cottage, down in the churchyard lane. A pretty cottage that, overhung with jessamine and roses, and kept so neat and clean. I never passed without stopping to have a chat with the pleasant looking widow, and her pretty daughter Lizzie. I fancied the jessamine Lizzie gathered for me much sweeter than my own ; and the widow seemed so bright and cheerful as her eyes followed the light form of her child, who never seemed so happy, as when she was doing a kindness for any one.

You might hear Lizzie's sweet voice singing, and wildly trilling like a gay lark long before you reached the cottage, and it rang pleasantly upon your ear, as you stood to gaze upon the quaint old monuments fretted by time. Lizzie was the pride and the boast of our village lads ; but her sweet gay temper and obliging disposition, kept our

lasses from being jealous of the village beauty.

But I must not wander from our church and its clean strange fashioned pews, its well swept aisles, and dark oak pulpit, with huge supported sounding-board.

There was one ancient monument which had been brought from the Abbey ruins, long, long ago, when they were pillaged by order of our Henry the Eighth. It lay there the wonder of the young, the reverence of the old. In truth it was a splendid work of art that sculptured form. It had been wrought in the fair land of Italy. A lady of surpassing beauty, dressed in rich robes; one hand held firmly clasped the emblem of her faith—the other tapered limb drooped by her side.

But the wondrous art of the Italian sculptor had imparted to the form the look of sleeping life—and the folds too of the heavy dress—the pendant fringe—and yielding cushion on which the head reclined

—all added to the first impression, Life-like !

She was, it was said, the lady of the founder of the Abbey, now in ruins !

Dear old church ! I love to gaze upon thee ; the first sight in the morning which greet's mine eye, is thy hoary ivied turret, my pretty bed-room commands a view of this spot I so much love, so sacred to my heart, for there rest the many I have loved, the dearest of them all, my father !

In mature life, that pretty church-yard had been one of my favourite resorts.

How loved and venerated he was, a man of deep learning, single heart, and sweet simplicity. A Christian both in deeds and words.

There, with my dear father leaning on my arm, I wandered pleasantly, listening to his rich, and ever varied conversation, whilst a merry prattler ran bounding around us, or gently sliding her little hand into mine, would walk demurely by my side,

listening to our talk, until wearied with what she could not comprehend, she once more ran off in happy glee, cheering the lonely solitude with her ever tuneful laugh, or childish shout of joy, as some fresh flower, or beautiful pebble, met her eager glance, and convinced her she had discovered a grand prize. And this was all that was left to me of my beloved brother and his bright young wife. They had both died on the plains of India, leaving to my love their only child, dear, precious gift, sweet Florence.

Bitter was the wintry night on which you came to us; but you soon brightened our hearth; soon did you become the playful darling of his old age; my sweet little companion, my hope, my fond delight.

But, alas! the torment of our prim old gardener, who sighed and smiled as he saw his favourite flowers disappear beneath your too mischief loving hands, and the sturdy champion of every to be drowned kitten

and puppy in the village, until at length the birth of these domestic animals were held in as much secrecy as many a state question.

The village of Moresdale ! my native village—the spot of all my joys and sorrows, this village so dear to me, was near the Devon coast, north or south it is not my intention to say, although I dare say, like all garrulous old women, I shall in some unguarded moment betray my secret. Some people say it is best not to possess so dangerous a thing as a secret. But then the importance which it gives you to know you possess something so many are anxious to obtain ; why, you feel taller, and stouter, and more dignified ; do not despise a secret ; depend upon it, it is a very grand thing, at least in some persons' opinion.

But I have left my dear village to write nonsense ; but, kind reader, remember I am only an old woman, placing before you the reminiscences of her youth, and of her

opinions, some strange and vague, pray pardon, but read.

Well, then, this home of my love, was a long, straggling affair, this Moresdale village, extending in length about three miles ; its breadth I do not exactly know.

It included some well kept farms, and numerous white-walled, pretty, thatched cottages, well stocked gardens, with rough uneven palings, which in summer were hid from view, by clustering roses, blossom-covered myrtles, and scented eglantines.

Most of these cottages commenced or ended one of those beautiful lanes, so peculiar to the county of Devon. Lanes embowered in trees, high banks, and luxuriant hedges. Rills for ever flowing from some unseen source, gliding along like silver threads away, amid the thick underwood, and wild waving flowers ! Then, again, appearing like some fairy stream, rippling and stealing along until it joins a wider, and a deeper.

There the village children might be seen, most of them busily endeavouring, with brown and sturdy hands, to imprison some of the innumerable little minnows, which, hidden behind a friendly stone, or streamlet root, awaiting but the disturbance of the water, to plunge by hundreds past their little enemies, and swim with startling rapidity to another hiding-place. I write of the time before railways and telegraphic wires were the fashion. When farmers drank their own cider, and eschewed wine, unless their wives' home-made dainties were set before them, on the grand days of christening, &c. ; when they rose with the sun and guided their own plough, and rode to market, and not to the hunting ground !

The days when their wives and daughters attended to the duties of their own dairies.

When the pride of the poultry-yard was one of honest delight. The days when the squire was the greatest man in the village, and his reverence the term applied to the clergy.

It was winter—cold, blighting, chilling winter, when our darling Florence came, without notice, to the old parsonage.

My father had been confined to his room for some weeks, and had this evening ventured down to his pleasant library. We had not heard from George or his wife for more than a year, and his last letter had spoken of his anxiety on her account; her delicate health, and his enforced absence from her, as his regiment was on active service; he dwelt most fondly on the description of their darling child, and his intention of sending her and her mother to England.

On this evening my father's spirits were unusually depressed, I wheeled his easy chair closer to the fire, parted his grey locks, and kissed his passive brow.

He looked up and smiled.

“Stir the fire, Maude, my darling, this is an unusually chilly evening.”

"More than chilly dear father," I returned as I raised a cheerful blaze, which quivered and danced in the ample grate. "I am afraid many of our poor neighbours will find this a trying winter."

"I am afraid they will, my child."

He held his long thin hands over the bright fire, then turning to me with his peculiarly placid smile, he continued—"Well, my little housekeeper, you must look over your stores, and give with a liberal hand."

Then followed a little conversation on the wants and troubles of our neighbours, our dear Moresdale poor—whilst I was preparing our evening meal, as he always called our pleasant tea.

My father was very peculiar about his table services. The whitest of cloths, the most delicate china, and the clearest of glass, was his delight.

I handed him his favourite beverage, buttered his wafer-like toast, and performed

all those little offices in which I knew he delighted to see me engaged.

We commenced our tea—I gaily chatting to cheer his desponding mood—and his dear face brightened as I spoke, and his pleasant smile came on his lips and eye as he listened and entered into some comic scenes I was describing, and which I had witnessed during my morning's rambles amongst the cottagers.

The wind had been gradually rising, it had left its threatening moans, and now burst into its wildest rage. The old trees trembled, and bent their aged branches to its fury. It tost their torn boughs against the windows, and hurled them whirling through the air, then rushing down the valley, died away faintly in the distance, only to return with greater violence, until the dashing torrent of rain seemed in some degree to lessen its power.

During one of the pauses in the storm, I thought I heard the sounds of carriage

wheels coming up the avenue. My father heard it also, he looked quickly up.

“Maude, who can that possibly be? Do you hear the sound of a carriage, or is it my fancy?”

“Certainly not fancy! It has stopped”—for we lived so retired, that a carriage at this time in the evening was quite an event.

My father rose to ring the bell, whilst I quickly stepped down the few stairs which led to the hall. The door was that instant opened. In came a tremendous rush of wind, seeming to sweep all before it—every light was extinguished! The servants involuntarily drew back. A dark mass of some kind obscured the little light the struggling moon gave to the door-way. I instinctively advanced close to the moving mass.

I heard a sweet childish laugh! It thrilled to my heart with the tenderest charm I had ever felt. Unconsciously I held out my arms—they closed on the form of a little child—the soft arms were around

my neck—the little cold face was nestled close to mine, and a voice, the voice of gone-by days! was whispering—“Aunt dear, Aunt Maude; I am little Florence! your own little Florence now! for papa, mamma,—” and the sweet loving voice was choked with sobs.

That little sobbing voice had told me all. I felt—I knew—that I pressed to my bosom the orphan child of my beloved brother. My father was absolutely bewildered when I returned with our little Florence in my arms, clinging to my neck, trembling from the combined effects of cold and excitement. I placed her in his arms. “Grand-papa,” sobbed the sweet childish voice. Ah! what a cry was that! A cry of anguish from my poor father. Her black dress had caught his eye, and he felt that his beloved and only son, had gone home before him.

Yes, dear father, you and George met no more on earth; but you are now together in heaven.

Thus came my Florence to the home of her father's youth.

In a few minutes she raised her head from my father's breast, and looked wistfully towards the open door.

"What is it my darling?" I asked.

"Oh, Aunt Maude, Captain Benson, he has been so kind."

I instantly understood her, and hastened from the room. I found him in the dining-room gazing at a likeness of dear George. I knew him by name, as a tried and dear friend of my brother's.

He was distressed and surprised that we were ignorant of their deaths. Evidently the letters which he had written to apprise us of the sad event, had been lost.

My dear brother had fallen in battle, and Fanny had survived him only a few weeks, and her last request was that her precious child might be sent to the old parsonage.

Captain Benson, who was coming to England with his family, kindly took charge

of his friend's orphan child, and with true friendship, he had left his own family as soon as he had settled them in a house, to see dear Florence safe under the roof of her grandfather.

We were mutually pleased to become personally acquainted, and he and his family passed some pleasant weeks with us during the ensuing summer, and I heard from Mrs. Benson many interesting accounts of my dear departed friends.

I took Florence on the morrow to see her great aunts, who were deeply afflicted at the news of our mutual loss, and welcomed our darling as a gift from heaven.

Ah ! my Florence, may you be reared to return to that God who gave thy spirit forth on its earthly trial—without His grace I cannot rear thee, sweet one—to tread this vale of tears, but I will pray to be supported and led in my path of duty. These were my thoughts as I gazed on thee, my beloved one, that first night so dear to memory.

I often picture that evening in my thought. I see my Florence as she was at six years old leaning against the arm of her grandfather's chair:—she reminded me most fondly of her mother.

The same long silken ringlets of golden hair that Titian loved to paint, just waving sufficiently to curl in massive locks. The same high white forehead, bright blue eyes, and tender glances.

But when she smiled, my brother was before me! That charming, winning smile, which at once claimed your confidence; the same firm rounded chin, full small mouth, and those peculiar teeth, white, square, and beautifully set.

She was indeed a treasure! A treasure of light, love, and mirth!

Sweet Florence, how I delight to recall that wintry evening, when you came like Spring's first lovely rose to dwell amongst us.

That picture is before me!

The look of tender interest upon my

father's countenance—as he supplied your wants. The trusting, loving expression of my Florence as she raised her eyes to his, the deep manly voice of Captain Benson, softening as he spoke of her dear parents, the subdued light which fell from the suspended lamp, and the brighter glow which at intervals arose from the cheerful fire.

Many years have passed, and I am alone, yet not so, but I must not anticipate, but relate the events of my life as they occurred.

But still I am old Aunt Maude to many.

CHAPTER III.

“ There is a lesson in each flower,
A story in each stream and bower ;
On every herb on which you tread
Are written words which rightly read,
Will lead you from earth's fragrant sod,
To hope, to holiness, and God.”

THE spring after my Florence came to the old parsonage was one of the most lovely I ever remember, and we prepared on the morning of the first of May quite early, to proceed to her great aunt's at the Manor House to join in sports which always welcomed in that spring month at the Boarding School. But boarding schools are not what they were when I was a girl. Then it was a very different kind of affair, to what I am told it is at present. Then, comfortless

rooms, and narrow backless forms were the fashion. To obey your parents the grand moral law.

To make a shirt for your father, or supply half-a-dozen brothers with such like garments was deemed a most befitting accomplishment.

Now, but every one can tell how such establishments are conducted at the present advanced age.

How daintily the young ladies are fed—how softly and cosily they sleep—what comfortable chairs and warm carpets are supplied to them.

What an astounding amount of learning is carried on !

I am told they really attend lectures like young men at college, and that the schools for young ladies are termed colleges too !

I certainly did go once when I was in London last year, and a pretty sight it was to see about a hundred young girls sitting around the tables, with paper and pencils

before them ; but my poor old head is so stupid that I cannot remember the subject, 'twas I know one of the ologies, but the professor—I remember well that was what he was termed—spoke so fast, and wrote so much on a black board behind him, that I was fairly bewildered.

I saw much munching of cakes and biscuits, and laughing quietly amongst the different sets of young girls, but I did not see much writing going on ; and certainly if they did not go away more edified than I was, they did not receive any benefit by going there. I remember well our dear old school-room at the Manor House—it was really the Manor House, but the family spending faster than their income came round they were obliged to let the old mansion, and go abroad to live.

Ah ! I shall have a strange story to tell of this old Manor House bye-and-by. Pray have patience with an old woman who loves to retrace the happy days of her childhood.

The Manor House was taken by the two daughters of the late rector of our village, and a goodly show their father's books made in the library, which was a room we approached with great awe. It was panelled with dark oak, and the windows were high, with small panes.

How well I remember the deep window seats where culprits were sent to con over the lessons they were too stupid, or too lazy to learn at the proper times.

There also was given Miss Butler's kind advice, and Miss Dora's long lectures. The former always subdued the most reckless to tears. The latter made the proud heart prouder, and the timid more frightened; but each in their own peculiar way were excellent women, and the tender love they evinced for their sister's orphan child, my dearest friend and afterwards sister, rivetted my life's affection upon them.

The school-room was a huge bow-windowed room, looking out on a spacious lawn with

deep borders of flowers—such flowers ; beautiful roses, lillies, sweet williams, stocks, wall-flowers, but I cannot remember one twentieth part. We had none of the grand sounding names they have in common now, they were very beautiful, at least we thought so. I love to recall these flowers of my youthful days.

In fancy I see the old-fashioned gardens, I hear the hum of the bees, wandering up and down amongst them. Well ! well !

I remember staying there during one of the midsummer holidays, the only child left. My father was ordered abroad for a few months, and I was too young to accompany him. I was allowed to do just as I pleased, and I used to lie down on a sweet mossy bank, with generally a fairy story for my companion, or the pet kitten, and the old deaf house-dog. When I was tired of reading, I would shut my eyes and listen to the hum of the bees, the soft coo of the wood pigeon, and the cluck, cluck, cluck

of the busy hen, until naughty Jowler would wake me up from my half dreamy rest by snapping at some drowsy fly settling on his poor old nose, or miss kitten would make a sudden rush at a gaudy butterfly which came too near her dainty paws. But I go rambling on forgetting you may never have been a little girl sleeping amongst the flowers and butterflies.

There were twenty pupils received at the Manor House. I was one of the little ones, that is, under twelve years of age, when a grand sensation was created amongst us by being informed one evening when we assembled after prayers, each to pass in array before our teachers to wish good night, that the Misses Butler had engaged a gentleman to give lessons in French and dancing. It was just after that dreadful time, called truly the reign of terror, or rather at the time, for Robespierre was not dead. Many of the French noblesse were taking refuge in England, and finding friends amid

strangers. I think our dear country must have been very different then, or society was, more properly speaking. People seemed more kindly generous then; perhaps there was not so much money given, but I cannot help thinking there was a more generous feeling evinced. They gave hospitality at their own firesides, and their own personal comforts were shared with those in want. Well! well! I can remember very much of the kind warm feelings displayed by rich and poor in receiving and aiding the unfortunate refugees in their home circle and at their home fireside.

The sisters at the Manor House were the kindest of the kind. On hearing that a French gentleman lay ill at his little lodging in the village—I remember he lodged at Dame Martin's—very kind they were to him; it was before the dame's husband was killed, and a kind friend the French gentleman proved to her when that happened. No sooner did his poor landlady tell of his illness

than the two sisters hastened to do all the good they could. They loaded Dame Martin with a store of things likely to comfort an invalid who had seen gentler days ; and Miss Butler hastened to my father, whilst Miss Dora called on our good doctor, who she knew would soon be sitting at the bedside of poor M. de Flury. Dr. Stanely was at home, and with a pretended grunt of displeasure hurried off Miss Dora to Dame Martin's, declaring women were always in the way, always doing wrong, and never leaving him in peace. I believe Dr. Stanely was the only one Miss Dora's spirit succumbed to. I did hear in after life that she had hoped, but hoped in vain, that the doctor's flinty heart might have yielded to her gentle submission, but really people are so unnatural, and so watching, and so——but there, I can do no more than say I never saw anything beyond kind friendship between them.

Well ! Miss Dora waited in the little parlour until the doctor came down from

his first visit to M. de Flury to know what could be done for him, and in answer to her enquiries he said abruptly—

“ The poor man wants food, money, consolation, and something to employ his mind with.”

The two first wants they liberally supplied, and called on my father for his advice for the two latter.

My father paid the poor sick gentleman a visit the same evening, and though M. de Flury was a Roman Catholic, and my father a Protestant clergyman, he found plenty of consolation to offer him.

There now only remained the last want, and after due consideration the proposal was delicately made to M. de Flury—would he give lessons at the Manor House? Poor M. de Flury! he thankfully accepted the offer thus made to him, and it was settled on the most liberal terms the Misses Butler could afford.

M. de Flury's mind having something

more than his own sorrows to dwell upon, his health soon rapidly recovered, and his spirits never seemed to flow so easily as when he was surrounded by his pupils.

Those dancing days! what gala days they were.

Those were the days of the gliding minuet, grave, dignified, and graceful.

It was a pretty sight to see the young girls in their white, open, full frocks, wide, long sashes, their curls falling on their graceful shoulders, and flowing far below their waists. No romping dances then, flushing the fair young faces, and contorting the graceful limb.

The low easy curtsey of his pupils, was met by the dignified bow of the master, and that, too, with the grace and ease of a French gentleman.

We had the honour of being taught by one who had often graced the court of the unfortunate Louis and Marie Antoinette. The short account he gave of himself was

that he had been separated from his family, and obliged to fly, his only son had been killed by his side fighting for his sovereign, his wife had fallen by the guillotine, and his daughter was supposed to have died in prison, for he could never gain any tidings of her fate.

Not a girl in the school, but considered it the greatest pleasure to perform some little act of kindness for M. de Flury; and our ripest fruits and most delicious cakes, sent from home, found their way to the lodging of the poor French gentleman, who returned our affectionate attentions by tales of *La belle France*, and the court of the lamented Louis and Marie Antoinette.

Of his family he never spoke, after the first conversation he held with my father on the subject; and as he requested he would inform his kind friends the Misses Butler of what he had related, they with delicate tact, only to be shown from a tender heart—never alluded to the subject.

Miss Dora seemed born for a governess. Tall, upright, and vigorous both in mind and body, she never spared herself or pupils, and if we did not improve in all our school duties, I am sure it was owing to no fault of Miss Dora.

She soon found out that M. de Flury was a man of deep learning, and she was constantly meeting him with some quotation in Latin, or asking his advice on an abstruse point in some fresh study she had engaged in.

You never saw Miss Dora without a book, or Miss Butler without her knitting, generally socks for some village children, or comforter for an old granny.

M. de Flury always met Miss Dora's advances with a dignified urbanity, which awed whilst it enchanted his fair friend; and many a learned discussion was held by them, which I have no doubt raised a smile to the mind of M. de Flury, but which he did not allow to be perceptible in his eye, or on his lip.

Admirable M. de Flury ! I see him now, tall, slender, with a slight stoop caused by a wound he had received in his side in endeavouring to save his son's life—one slender hand resting in the breast of his waistcoat, the other holding a small gold snuffbox, the last gift of his sovereign, and which he had never parted with even in his deepest distress : thus he would stand, in his favourite posture whilst he was talking, negligently leaning against the window, or mantelpiece, one leg crossed over the other tapping the floor gently with his foot. Few men could have looked so dignified and graceful, as did the French dancing-master of the old Manor House.

Although M. de Flury received our little gifts of affection, and returned them by a thousand acts of kindness, he never would accept any presents from the gentry in the neighbourhood, and my father's, the Misses Butlers', and our good doctor's, were the only houses he would visit at.

It was nearly seventeen years the Misses Butlers had had the good fortune of being assisted in their labours by M. de Flury, when my darling Florence arrived from India. It was the rule for those pupils who had left school and were living in the neighbourhood, to attend the sports of May-Day at the old Manor House.

I had never once failed the meeting under the may-pole.


What a beauteous first of May !

Up rose the sun, kissing as he rose, the sparkling drops of dew from every blade and flower within the influence of his radiance.

Up rose the birds ; from bower to tree ; from spray to spray, they flit, swelling forth the vocal concert.

Up rose the joyous, spring gladdening group of young girls at the old Manor House, and before the blue smoke from the cottages had curled above the wooded dell, they had all met on the southern lawn.

What fairy forms are flitting to and fro !
what joyous faces ! what tuneful cheering
voices, and what light and dancing feet are
flitting o'er the greensward, still sparkling
with gems of dew ! 'Tis the first of May !
and the best child is to be the queen of
the day. Not a farmer in the parish but
sends something ; not a farmer's wife who
did not bring or send some nice, choice,
dainty, rich primrose-tinted cream butter
just churned, and cakes, such cakes ! short,
rich, creamy cakes, which would melt in
your mouth, making you wonder whether
you could get the receipt and make some
like them. And then the flowers, such
flowers ! They came chiefly from the castle
and the old parsonage, and at seven in the
morning you might have seen our pony-
chaise laden with myself and little Florence,
that is if the bunches of flowers had not
rendered us invisible ; and soon after came
the cart from the castle filled with boughs
of evergreens, and bundles of flowers, and




a hamper, besides something good from the ancient housekeeper, for though the family were abroad—and I have a tale to tell of them, too—Mrs. Brownlow always sent the cart as she did in days gone by, for the Manor House School had been kept by the Misses Butler for thirty years. Such flowers, such evergreens, such clapping of hands, such glowing faces, such embracing between the schoolgirls and those who were so no longer. Then came the Misses Butler, there was no resisting the contagion of the children's ardour, they forgot they were the heads of the establishment, and ought to be stately and dignified; they forgot all but to join the children's glee, and the children themselves in happiness. They helped to dress the may pole, to tie up the wreaths, to unpack the baskets; we were all young together, for was it not the first of May!

There was a lovely little green sward the other side of the brook, this was always

mown for the occasion, and here the pole was raised, and here danced the merry dancers of the old-fashioned country dances. Many an eye glanced for M. de Flury, for May Day would scarce have been May Day without him.

The brook which divided this beautiful spot from the lawn was a clear winding, murmuring little stream, something more than murmuring, for it had so many devious short turnings and twinings, so many little tumblings and eddyings, that sometimes the little streamlet did more than murmur. There was one demure-looking spot where the alders grew in a clump, and where the trout loved to hide. Just below this spot there was quite a cascade, and after a little rain, such splashing and dashing, you could hear it singing and quivering right across the meadow. Such foaming and roaming! such leaping and sweeping took place when the showers made the cascade a deepening. But to this little brook, now innocently



rippling and singing in the sunshine, came on that identical first of May our dear M. de Flury.

As he was perceived coming across the stepping-stones, which at that spot enabled us to cross to the meadow, an universal race of the little ones took place, and the elder girls advanced with smiles to meet their kind friend.

Ah! what is that which M. de Flury carries so carefully in his hand.

The paper was taken off, and they beheld an elegant pale pink scarf from La Belle France waving from his extended hand.

M de Flury always had some little surprise on May morning.

“For the best dancer,” said he, advancing with one of his most dignified bows. What sparkling eyes! what glowing cheeks! yet all well knew who deserved that elegant gift! The gentle, graceful, amiable Margaret Seaton, the daughter of the Squire of Moresdale. With his usual graceful manner

M. de Flury advanced to the blushing girl, who stood with her eyes modestly bent on the ground, for from the congratulations of her companions softly uttered she was aware for whom the fluttering prize was intended. He threw it over her left shoulder, and tied it on her right side.

It was quite a little scene, and a soft sad smile came over his features as he remembered his own beloved monarch bestowing some insignia of honour.

M. de Flury claimed the hand of Margaret for the first dance under the May pole.

All was now a delightful hurry towards the meadow, where the breakfast was laid out, and where the men were fixing the beautiful and fragrantly adorned May pole.

M. de Flury gallantly handed his fair bevy across the stepping-stones.

Not one little foot touched the water. Once he slipped, and one foot was emerged in the clear stream, but his dignity was not

ruffled. Each little head was turned aside, no one appeared to notice the disaster.

Such was the genuine politeness of the fair girls of the Old Manor House. The motto there was—"Think of other people's feelings before your own amusement."

We are all safely across. The chair of state is placed beneath the May pole, looking as much like a throne as possible.

The queen is to be chosen, and a wreath of the choicest flowers is placed on the seat of the throne. But how can the best be fixed upon where all are good?

What can be the test?

The test of self-denial.

All eyes are directed towards our gentle Margaret—the scarf-decked Margaret—when a party from her father's house is seen on the lawn; her eldest sister, Clara, who is a general favourite, comes towards the stepping-stones, leading by the hand a little girl, perhaps about thirteen years of age; her

long black hair is hanging far below her waist, and as we drew nearer to meet them I remarked the peculiar beauty of her countenance, her graceful form and small delicately made feet. M. de Flury advances to assist them in crossing. Clara kindly thanks him in her clear frank voice—she is past—he turns to the little girl, her companion—He is seen to start, almost to fall—he recovers himself—but fearfully pale, he steadies himself by leaning on the shoulder of that most lovely child, who with sweet foreign accent is entreating him to seat himself on the bank. He complies, quite unable to stand. Clara takes the hand of the trembling girl. She says she is not frightened, only sorry for Monsieur.

“You are very pale, Marie,” says Clara.

“Marie! Marie!” cries the agitated M. de Flury. “Ah! mon dieu! Speak to me, my little one. Oh yes, you must be the child of my own Marie,” and he sank sob-

bing on the shoulder of the weeping girl.

“Monsieur, Monsieur,” she sobbed forth, kneeling beside him and passing her little hand over his face, can you be my mamma’s dear papa—the good father she weeps for so often! Ah mon dieu, let her not die of this great joy.”

“I thank thee, my God!” exclaimed M. de Flury, embracing her, “where, my child, is your mother?”

“Come,” said Marie, rising, “I will take you to her.”

And before any explanation could be given, Clara, M. de Flury, and Marie were in the carriage returning to Mr. Seaton’s. The children were all weeping, joy for their friend was painted on their countenances, and they returned to their day’s pleasures with greater zest that M. de Flury had found his daughter. The story is soon told—her mother, the Marchese de Noailles,

had been the favourite attendant of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, and had suffered with her on the guillotine. Her young daughter, named after her royal mistress, was thrown into prison, and would have met her death by the same fearful means had not her nurse's son found access to her prison; any one of the people could save the life of a noblesse by becoming their husband; and with manly humility Henri Dubois besought the beautiful and nobly born Marie to become his wife, and he would afterwards endeavour to convey her to England. Marie consented, and never had cause to regret having done so.

Henri afterwards became one of Napoleon's favourite generals. They had a letter of introduction to Mr. Seaton's family from some friends in Paris, and as Madame Dubois' health became delicate, her husband had entreated her to avail herself of an opportunity of visiting England,

though his duties prevented his accompanying her. They had had several children, but Marie was the sole surviving one.

We all rejoiced in our beloved M. de Flury's happiness, but we could not help regretting the loss of his society; to my father it was very great, for though they differed in their religious principles, yet there was an affinity in their educated minds and amiable dispositions which almost unconsciously drew them together as friends and companions.

The poor Misses Butler were in great distress how to replace the loss of Monsieur's valuable instructions, until Madame Dubois mentioned a friend of her's, one of the noblesse, who would thankfully receive their offer of a house and handsome salary, on one condition, that she was not to be introduced to strangers; this was easily promised, and we all looked forward with much interest to the arrival of Mdle. la Fayette

in the autumn, as Madame Dubois said she could not leave France until her return.

Florence was such a comfort and amusement to me that my dear father consented that she should be educated at home, and many a sad hour has she beguiled, many a listless feeling has she brightened. We all have our trials and sorrows, and I had mine. Blest with such a parent, home, and friends, many might say I could have nothing to make me unhappy.

Alas! I had had a severe trial, and my brother's child had been sent to fill up the sad void in my heart.

I had loved one I had known from childhood, and he, alas! was unworthy of the pure affection I had bestowed upon him. My heart told me my father was right when he insisted upon my giving up the engagement, but his reproaches and wild entreaties tore my heart with agony. I loved him too well to speak of his faults, others termed them vices.

We never met after that fearful morning when my father took me insensible from his arms, and insisted on his leaving the house.

In a few months my Florence came, my joy, my pride.

CHAPTER IV.

THE summer months passed quickly by, and we began to talk of the arrival of Mdle. la Fayette. We had heard several times from the Marquis de Noailles, or as we still loved to call him, M. de Flury ; he was in hopes of being reinstated in some of his estates, but still there was great jealousy felt against the old noblesse of France. Napoleon, the people's darling, who was now leading his troops to conquest, seemed to lose his good fortune from the time of his deserting Josephine, and the star of Wellington was in the ascendency.

It was in the autumn of 1811 when Mdle. la Fayette arrived at the Old Manor House, and she brought with her the sad news of

General Dubois' death. He had fallen from a shot whilst gallantly leading on his men at the battle of Barossa.

The young French lady was welcomed with every kindness by the excellent women at the Manor House, and with affectionate attention by the fair girls who looked upon her as the friend of their still affectionately remembered M de Flury. She was of the middle height, elegantly formed, and endowed to a high degree with that grace of manner peculiar to a French lady. But there was a sadness in those large brown eyes, a trembling on those beautifully formed lips, which was almost distressing to witness. Her kindness and attention to her pupils was everything her friendly employers could wish.

And eight years passed swiftly away. Many changes had taken place in our dear little circle; the old were growing into feebleness, and the young were enjoying the pleasures which youth and vigour impart.

Christmas is a happy, merry time, but I think it was merrier when I was young. Then it was a time of universal rejoicing. Families met who had been parted the whole year, and who during that year had either looked to the Christmas past, or forward, to the Christmas yet to be born, as an epoch of family affection; one in which all the members were to sympathize in past events or in expected ones. Friends who had quarrelled and looked forbiddingly at each other for many a month, now met at the fireside of some mutual friend—perhaps unexpectedly! perhaps invited by their respected host, in the hope that the kind feelings of their past lives might be remembered without the alloy of one bitter thought.

The glow of friendly congratulations around thaws the ice which mistaken words or motives, and afterwards pride or temper had frozen around them, hearts which had loved each other for many a long year, lips

which had oft times been eloquent in each other's praise, have long been cold and silent. But they meet now where they had not met for many a year. The well-known voice which had not saluted them for many a weary month, now sounds sweetly on their ear! instinctively the hand is grasped! the kindling eyes have met, lighting with the kindness of days long passed away. The bitter word forgotten—the fancied wrong no longer remembered—their hearts are stirring as of old, and many a reminiscence flows pleasantly from their smiling lips.

But my Christmas Eve deserves a chapter to itself, and it shall have one.

CHAPTER V.

“ It is a season for the quiet thought
And the still reckoning with thyself. The year
Gives back the spirits of the dead, and time
Whispers the history of its vanished hours,
And the heart calling its affections up,
Counteth its wasted ingots.”

HAPPY Christmas! merry Christmas! It calls upon us to rejoice and to give joy to all those within our influence.

In those days everyone was busy, preparing for Christmas long before the snow-storm heralded its approach, for those were the Christmas times when the snow fell fast, and the snowdrift lay so thick that travelling was something adventurous, and when friends met for days and were snow-bound for weeks to your hearth. Everyone was busy then, for ladies made their own Christmas puddings themselves, ah! and wines

and cakes, too, and all sorts of good things ; we never thought of having them made for us. Then to be a clever housekeeper was considered a grander accomplishment than tormenting your company's ears with badly pronounced French, or inharmonious music.

But those good old times are past and gone. I dare say it is all right, but old people miss those simple pleasures. At Christmas everyone gave and received presents, and the pleasantest part was trying to suit the present to the taste and wants of those for whom they were intended : above all, the poor were thought of—not but what they are now—but then there is so much committee meetings, letter writings and printings, that really I think half the money intended for their wants is spent before it is decided how the business is to be conducted. Then the poor somehow seemed to belong to one's own home and hearth. We knew what each wanted, and what each wished for. I hear people com-

plain that the poor are ungrateful. I never found them so. I have often found them bad tempered ; and who is not so sometimes, even with every comfort around them. No wonder then that the poor are, with their privations, and sick children, and careless husbands, but I always found gratitude ooze out somehow.

I remember one poor woman, who, to use her own form of speech, " was always in a peck of troubles," and whom many termed ungrateful, because she was always complaining, once saying to me,

" Sure now, Miss Maude, 'tis very bad to bear, I no sooner get out of one trouble than I am into another."

" True Peggy," said I, " but it might be worse, suppose no one befriended you !"

" The Lord does send me friends," answered Peggy with a warm tear glistening on her cheek.

There was a world of gratitude in poor Peggy's heart, unspoken, perhaps unknown

to herself, for she was an habitual grumbler ; but she had troubles unnumbered, delicate health, sickly children, and a brutish husband.

“ Try Peggy,” said I, as I left her “ not to grumble so much. People think you ungrateful for their kindness ; when you are in trouble endeavour not to talk of it—think to yourself, the Lord has helped me, and he will help me now.”

“ I’ll try, Miss Maude,” said the poor woman, “ but ’tis mortal hard to bear, there’s—”

I held up a warning finger—and a wan smile came over her sickly countenance, but she said more cheerfully :—“ I said it. Miss Maude, and it has turned away half the troubled feel I had.”

Poor woman ! ’twas mortal hard to bear but she was not ungrateful.

But I’ve wandered away from my Christmas-eve—all day our poor of Moresdale had been coming and going ; for my father

had made it a practice of supplying their wants on that day, that Christmas might pass with them, as comfortably and happily as we could make it.

There were many things left, for some poor sickly women could not come for theirs, and had to wait until their husbands returned from their day's work, and could fetch them. Such bundles of blankets ! Such baskets of eatables ! Such bottles of elder wine yet remained to be given away when the day light began to wane.

Then in the kitchen, such chopping of suet and raisins, and peeling of apples, and such presents of turkeys and game, as though we were to eat nothing else during the rest of our lives.

But I am beginning to feel ashamed of talking so much about eating, yet I can assure you on the word of an old lady, that if there were grand dinners in the parlours, there were good dinners in the kitchen ; and if they graced the dining-room of the

Squire, they smoked also on the tables of the cottager.

The sofas were covered with flannel petticoats ; the tables crouded with babies' socks, shoes, and caps, as though the world was full of nothing else but babies. Save and except sundry old goodies, who were to be supplied with warm shawls, thick shoes, and inconceivably comfortable stockings, which defied rheumatism and all non-descript pains.

What a party at the old parsonage ! Every one seems to be coming in this evening, and every one bustling away !

Such a glorious, cold, clear frosty night, though they do say we shall have another fall of snow ere long.

Every one is helping to do something if 'tis only mischief. My young cousin Frank Middleton is staying here as full of mischief as ever, worse I think. The brave generous hearted boy ! He is just returned from his first voyage, and is relating some

marvellous adventures to a group of listeners, some younger, some older than himself. But they are not strangers to Frank, they are the companions of his boyhood, and they seem rather proud of the bold handsome sailor lad, with his bright wavy hair, sparkling eyes, and fine manly figure, which is set off by the smart tight jacket, and carelessly tied black silk handkerchief. Master Frank has smelt powder and made the foe feel his blows too, and he is a boy no longer.

They generally believe his wonderful stories, all excepting one bright eyed little girl, but she knew him of old. She remembers well, how by the bright streamlet's bank, the thick hazel copse, or beneath the moon-lit bower, he embellished the fairy stories, and how even Sinbad the Sailor grew into inconceivable editions under the authorship of Master Frank Middleton.

Yes, yes, cousin Frank, you may look imploringly at merry Florence! She will

not betray you ; but for all that, she does not believe one word in ten of all the fine adventurous tales you are relating.

What a tremendous noise in the dining-room !

The boys and girls have suddenly scamp-ered off ! all but Florence, who is stopping to pick up and place in order the flannel petticoats Frank, in his awkwardness, has thrown down, or, as I surmise in his wicked wilfulness, for I saw a glance of mischief, Florence did not.

“ My dear Maude, had you not better go into the dining-room and see what is the matter ? ”

“ Nothing wrong, father dear ; but I’ll go nevertheless.”

Just as I thought, Dr. Stanely made captive.

“ No escape for the next two hours, Dr. Stanely,” says Frank, “ both the gates locked, enemies made prisoners ; fairly caught, Dr. Stanely.”

“And the pony locked in the stable,” cries another young rogue, holding up the key.

The doctor puts on a face of lamentation which highly delights the youngsters.

This capture has been planned evidently, for the girls have prepared a chain of artificial flowers, which they dexterously throw around the doctor, kind old man ; and each beset him for a verse, riddle, or a song, all of which he complies with most humorously.

He in his turn puts some simple but puzzling questions to the boys, at whose defeat the girls join him in playful banter.

But still the doctor will not part with his great coat, in which he looks like some victimized bear led in triumph by the nymphs of the season. Suddenly he draws from its enormous pockets a huge bunch of misletoe and kisses the young girls, commencing with the half frightened Florence, and pursues the rest of his tormentors.

What a charming, ringing, musical laugh-

ter ; musical because it is the innocent laugh of a happy youth. Musical ! because it comes from the heart's mirth, yet uncontaminated with the world's selfishness.

Chairs and tables disappear in a most mysterious manner ! and the doctor is blind-folded.

How he springs from side to side.

How he tumbles over the boys, and gently seizes on the girls, no escape.

There is a general cry of " Not fair ! not fair ! The doctor can see."

To this accusation he is most indignant, but at length by great petting and coaxing from all parties his pretended anger is appeased.

The party is increased.

Frank fetches everyone into the room, not excepting the two Miss Butlers, who have just called to ask some questions concerning our Christmas gifts. All join in the game, old and young, no one is excused but my father, and even he is detected giving sly

hints to the blinded one, who chanced to be his darling Florence, of who could be caught, and the whereabouts of their retreat.

Then follows a game of forfeits, during which my father is again detected quietly aiding his favourite Florence, for which demeanour his reverence is called upon for a song.

My dear father, how kindly he complies and he sings one of Burns' tender, simple, thrilling ditties.

There is a sudden stillness in the room, as softly his full melodious voice rises, gliding from heart to heart, and awaking to life the poetry of each young breast. Tears glisten in the eyes of some of the young girls, and many a manly lad raises my father's hand respectfully to his lips as the last cadence seems to linger on the ear. Their young loving hearts are touched, softened unconsciously.

The games are renewed, perhaps not so noisily as before, and they end in a country

dance, and God Save the King, in which we all join, even the old servants and the little helping-maid, who are peeping in from the hall. As soon as it is ended they are pounced upon by Frank Middleton, who pretends to drive them in, but it is that they may get a glass of wine.

Old Dorcus and Jim have lived half a century in our family, for they faithfully served my grandfather, they look with an apologizing glance towards my father.

As for little Jenny, she seems ready to sink into the earth, and tries to hide herself behind the portly form of old Dorcus.

My dear father with his benevolent smile soon put them all at their ease, saying, in his friendly tone,—

“They must drink a glass of wine to welcome back the young sailor.”

“And in our hearts,” he continued, as he filled their glasses, “let us give thanks that he has been returned to us in safety.”

My father just put his glass to his lips

and nodded to the humble congratulations of his servants. He was, in truth, "A good old English Gentleman."

Hark! 'Tis the voice of the village singers—they are had into the hall, and most sweetly to my ear, do their voices tune to the Christmas hymn.

"Unto us a child is born,
Unto us a Son is given."

We are pleased, and they are pleased, and proud of being invited into the kitchen, where Dorcus and Jim join them in some good cheer, and little Jenny waits upon them all.

After our extempore visitors are gone the family assembled for prayers, and I noticed Frank kneeling by my father's side, and his hand rested on the lad's head, as his voice was raised in thanksgiving that his young life had been spared in the day of battle, and in the wild strife of the tempest storm. Frank was his favourite sister's only child, and that beloved sister had died when he


was a little fellow of five years old. She had lost her husband in a decline a few months after her child was born. Thus Frank was taught to look upon the old Parsonage as his home.

We exchange a kiss of love and peace, and thus ends for us another Christmas Eve.

CHAPTER VI.

“ How sometimes nature will betray its folly,
Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime
To harder bosoms.”

THERE are other homes where the voice of merry mirth and solemn greetings have taken place on that happy Christmas Eve. There is Farmer Lyddon's large kitchen decked off with holly, and its red berries shine in the bright firelight, but the prickly leaves shine brighter still. They glisten as the fire-flame flashes on them, and the farmer declares they are asking to be warmed in the blaze which is shining for them. So he plucks leaf after leaf and throws them on the glowing embers, and calls on his plump rosy-cheeked daughter Susy to see



how they laugh and dance in the merry Christmas fire. But Susy declares she is ashamed of her father's childishness in spoiling her handsome boughs, and she will not let him have any more, and he shan't do it again. And then commences one of their usual romps, till the farmer is quite subdued with laughing, and sits down in granny's big chair, with panting Susy on his knee.

Susy is a fine, rosy, strong girl of seventeen, spoilt by both father and mother. But not spoilt neither—only desperately pettied. Her fine generous temper, and warm loving heart keeps all right, and although Susy always has her own way, somehow 'tis her parents' way too.

She looks very well to-night. She has on her new dress her father bought to surprise her with the last time he went to the market town, and it came home ready made. This was a most astonishing thing, and the farmer has been asked and teased a hundred

times on the subject. But he only laughs, rubs his hands and pulls his buxom daughter on his knee to be smothered with kisses.

Susy never suspects that her mother, who still so demurely at work, had given him one of her dresses for the dressmakers. The only change, to make it an inch longer. There sits Susy on her father's knee, her long flaxen hair, which curls naturally, is hanging about her neck and shoulders, for her father has stolen all her combs, and he has them in his huge hand, which he holds far beyond her reach. But she soon brings down the huge strong arm, for no one knows so well as Susy that her father has a weak point in his left side, in fact the strong farmer became weak if his left side were tickled. So to work goes the nimble fingers of Susy just inside the farmer's waistcoat and down comes the strong arm and he is obliged to cry for mercy!

Just then in comes the stately dame, Mrs. Lyddon, dressed most becomingly, and she

tells Susy she is too old for such wild games ; but the farmer soon spoils all his wife's stateliness with a few hearty kisses. And Susy has the laugh at her mother.

" A merry Christmas, mother," says Susy, kissing the laughing dame.

" A merry and a happy one to you, darling," drawing her rosy-cheeked daughter into her loving embrace.

" And a merry and a happy one to both," says the farmer, throwing his strong honest arm around them.

" But Susy, my child," says the mother, " you are not fit to be seen."

Collecting, as she spoke, the flying tresses into her large handsome hand.

" Father, what have you done with the child's combs ?" she asks.

A good hunt the farmer has for them, and when he declares some witch must have flown up the chimney with them, merry Susy, with a gleesome laugh, holds

them up to him, for they have been hid in her hand all the time.

"I'll punish you for this," cries her father, and off he goes.

"Where is he gone, mother," cries laughing Susy.

"For more sport, child, I guess," answers her mother.

"Let's peep, mother."

As Susy is running out of the room.

"You would not be so wild if you knew what I do, Susy."

"What do you know mother?" cries Susy eagerly, coming back.

"They do say the good ship Hero is put into port, and Master Frank is down at the Parsonage."

"Oh mother!" cries Susy, turning very pale.

At this moment the father returned with a huge bunch of misletoe, which he held over his daughter's head, but her pale face

and tearful eyes seemed to take his very breath away from him!

“What ails the child, mother?” cried he, as soon as he could speak.

“Nothing! father, nothing,” answers the good dame, for the colour was come back sure enough, and the bright sparkling glance which shot beyond the good farmer made him turn hastily round.

At the door stood one of the handsomest sailor lads that ever trod the deck of a ship.

“Why Willie lad, I did not know the Hero was in port, but you are heartily welcome.”

And the farmer grasped the young man’s hand, and fairly dragged him into the middle of the room.

“Kiss her lad! kiss her,” he cries, as Willie stood holding Susy’s hand in his, love depicted on every feature. But Susy did not choose to be saluted so publicly, so slipped behind her mother, who received Willie’s embrace instead of her daughter.

Willie is a grand favourite in the village, and many a neighbour drops in at Farmer Lyddons that Christmas Eve. And a right good welcome they have, and the farmer's cider drinks better than ever with a fine roasted apple popped into each fresh jug.

But if Willie does not kiss Susy under the misletoe bough he takes care no one else does, for he keeps close to her for the rest of the evening, and he goes with her too to help to draw the cider. And once the farmer calls out—

“ Whistle, lad, whistle all the time you are gone.”

At this there is a general laugh, and poor Susy returns with a heightened colour, and her mother goes to draw the rest of the cider, giving father a good pinch on the ear the first time she passes him, at which he casts a penitent look at blushing Susy.

And thus passes the Christmas Eve at Farmer Lyddon's hospitable fireside.

But there is a fine store of plum pudding
in the dame's cellar which is to be sent to
many a poer cottage on the morrow morning.

God bless their honest guileless hearts.

CHAPTER VII.

Like the lilly,
"That once was mistress of the field, and flourished,
I'll hang my head and perish—"

"Grief fills up the room of my absent child,
Lies in her bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on her pretty looks, repeats her words,
Remembers me of all her gracious parts."

"Alas ! alas !
Why all the souls that are, were forfeit once,
and He that might the 'vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy."

THERE is many another blazing fire and cheerful hearth in farm and cottage. Many a glancing light shining through the village casements. There's many a careful housewife preparing the Christmas pudding, and many a kind heart rejoicing over some comfort, or little treat made for a poor invalid.

There is a bright light in the village church, the bells have been merrily ringing but the ringers have just left, and the old lame sexton assisted by his buxom daughter is giving the last finish to the dressing of the church for the happy Christmas-day.

The torch held by a sleepy looking boy, shines on the bright sparkling holly leaves, and its bunches of red berries. They place an additional bough or two on the sides of his Reverence's pew.

"Because Miss Maude likes to see plenty of them!" so Hannah my favourite Sunday school teacher, expresses my feelings on the subject.

Another walk down the sounding aisles, their footsteps ringing on the old walls, which seems in the lone dimness of the scene like the moanings of the departing year. A long silent look around—The torch held high above their heads by the smiling Hannah. Slowly comes a grunt of satisfaction from her father, and a feeble at-

tempt at a smile from the stupid looking urchin. They leave the church ; the sexton carefully locking the door.

Hannah peeps keenly through one of the windows, to see that no unlucky flourish of the torch has left a spark behind. The old sexton stamps out its blaze, they do not require its light ; but they did not pause to look at the beauty of that silvery radiance, which rendered it needless.

What a clear and brilliant sky ! the heavens are glistening with sparkling gems, set in its deep blue dome ! As you gaze, they seem magically to spring forward into notice, filling up space, where but the instant before, no space seemed to exist.

Swiftly flits away that soft light cloud from off the face of the Christmas moon, leaving her to shine in her clear full radiance as she shone centuries before, upon the lowly manger, and the sacred babe !

Wonderful mystery ! wonderful goodness ! cold and debased must be that heart, which

does not bow in spirit at the remembrance of that night; when the charmed air resounded with the song of the angelic host. That night which brought peace to man! Salvation to the repentant sinner. That moon which lit the listening shepherds, which shone on the lowly manger in the East! Now shines on the English village church; which to-morrow will resound with praises to Emanuel. It shines on the old turrets! It glistens on the thick ivy clinging to its sides, and lights up with its soft tender rays, the old painted windows and falls in long streams, upon the silent aisle, and faded monuments.

The churchyard path is clearly defined, and the shadows of the waving trees flit on the hard white snow, which has fallen on it since the morning.

Those soft silvery beams linger on the thatch and broken palings of a lone cottage in the church-yard lane. In that house no cheerful fire enlivens the lonely room, but

lies smouldering and blinking upon the dim, unswept, untidy hearth. There the old sexton and his daughter stop. They lean upon the broken gate, which has been swinging and moaning with every passing breeze. The old man places his trembling hand upon his daughter's shoulder, murmuring :—" God bless thee my good child!"

" Oh father !" returned Haunah, wiping away a few tears which had risen unbidden.

" Don't be too hard upon Lizzie ! She was the prettiest and best girl in the village."

" Was," said the old sexton, limping away—

" Her poor mother ! Her poor mother !" sobbed Hannah, as she tries to fasten the gate ; " She does so reproach herself that she let Lizzie go to London."

Her father turned round suddenly ; he was going to say something harsh, but seeing Hannah's tearful eyes, he only shakes his head and limps on.

They are out of sight of that lonely

cottage down in the churchyard lane, where no cheerful bustle tells of a happy hearth, and merry Christmas eve. That cottage did not speak of poverty but you might detect misery of the heart, too well! too well! But once it was different; the spirit of innocent joy seemed to reign there. Yes that lone woman sitting by that desolate hearth, was once the happiest and most contented woman in the village.

These are the remains of beauty in that faded face; and naturally graceful is that bending, drooping form. But Ah! that look of woe! that look which tells of the consuming grief, deep, deep, within the heart. The crushing, maddening, shame which drives her from her fellows.

She falls upon her bed at night, worn, depressed, darkened, by her shame. She awakes with the morning's light, she springs from her pillow, wet with her gushing tears. Bewildered! feeling only the weight which broods upon her bruised

heart. Too soon she rallies ! Too soon remembers all ! Remembers that which causes the dulness of her heart ! The throbbing of her brow ! Poor mother !

She turns from the light of day, as though ashamed that that should see her hidden sorrow. Alas ! not hidden. For all the village knows full well, that her young, too lovely, once innocent child, has left her mother and her home. Months, months have past since last she saw, and blessed her Lizzie, who much against my father's advice, was allowed to go to London to visit a married friend almost as young and thoughtless as herself.

Months, months, are past ! no tidings of the lost one—no trace of the mourned and ruined Lizzie.

The mother's prayer though oft unspoken, is groaned forth upon the sleepless bed.

“ Father ! merciful Father, bring her to repentance.

“ My Lizzie ! My own, my only child.”

Poor mother! that heartfelt prayer rises.
Aye! Sweetly to His throne who hears in
secret, but answers openly.

Yes, that unslumbering God! hears her
groans—the prayer spoken only by the
tortured spirit.

You remember my bright-eyed Lizzie,
whose garden I loved to visit? Whose
sweet young voice would ring through the
churchyard path, and mingle with the
passing breeze.

It is the same. Lost Lizzie! Lost Lizzie!
No matter that lost one's story, that she is
lost, and mourned, tells all.

Dark, sad, and lonely!

How desolate looks that poor mother.
Untouched her tea, placed carelessly upon
the little table, Lizzie used so carefully to
spread. No loving accents rouse her now;
no tender kiss upon her pale cheek calls
forth the welcome smile—no thrilling voice
to say—"A merry Christmas mother!"

Gone! gone! gone!

Gone ! comes the sad wail from the lips of the forsaken mother, as she rocks herself to and fro on the low chair on which she used to sit to sing to sleep her baby Lizzie.

On goes the wind, moaning and wailing, answering the cry of the poor mother. The bitter beating wind coming up the valley, driving the cold sleet before it. On ! on it comes, whirling and raging and cowering about the form of a young girl coming up the churchyard path. She has watched the sexton leave the church. She crouched behind a dark, damp tombstone as they passed her. She noted how the blooming Hannah helped her lame father down the slippery path. She heard their cheerful laugh, and listened to their merry voices until they reached the lone cottage in the lane, and then the laugh was hushed.

There came a cry upon the passing breeze as though a heart were breaking.

The young girl rises. She has no bonnet

on—her fair hair hangs in wet masses on her poor chilled bosom. Her cold feet are half out of her worn shoes, which clink, clink on the hard frozen ground. The old cloak is caught by the wind and flies whirling and beating against her trembling form. She stops and gazes around her—she wrings her thin hands—she kneels and tries to pray. She cannot! she cannot—she springs from the ground and rushes wildly up the lane. Who is that looking through the small casement of that lone cottage. There where the poor mother sits by the fireless hearth weeping for her lost one.

What are those words rushing forth with a mighty faith of love.

“ Oh thou who wast born for our peace. Oh thou who wast born for the penitent sinner, hear me. Oh! my Lizzie! my Lizzie! break! break her stony heart, Oh Lord! break, but forgive.”

Hark! What rises with the wailing cry of the blast.

“ Mother! mother.”

But the mother hears not.

On sweeps the blast—the casements shake
and rattle—the poor tottering sinner is
clinging to the window-frame, faint, sick
with her shame, her sorrow, and penitence.

Again rises that despairing cry

“ Mother! mother! mother!”

The wind is wailing far, far down the
valley.

“ Mother! mother!”

Up springs that desolate woman. She
dashes the cap from her head—she presses
back the falling masses of hair from her ears.

“ Lizzie, my child! Oh God am I mad?”

Again that wail so faint—“ Mother.”

The door is burst open—the fallen form
is raised from the cold ground in the mother’s
trembling arms—it is pressed frantically to
the mother’s breast—the cold pale lips are
kissed again and again.

Poor mother! The God of thy love has
heard thy faithful prayer. Thy Lizzie has
returned in penitence.

Who can portray the undying, the un-failing love of a mother. Her child has returned—she lies on the bed that was her's from her childhood—that weary head rests again on her mother's breast—those feeble hands are again raised between her mother's in prayer—prayer for pardon from that God she had so long abandoned. What matter that her Lizzie's form grows weaker and weaker! the tint on her cheeks brighter! and brighter. Her Lizzie is penitent. To her God and her mother alone are known the story of her wrongs. With her last breath is raised a prayer for him! for his forgiveness! for his penitence. He! the wronger—the betrayer. To my ear alone had she whispered his name—his name! alas! it was that of the man I had once loved. I know not whether Lizzie knew I was once to have been the wife of that man, for as she named him the tears stood upon her burning cheek, and her feeble fingers grasped mine with a strength of agony.

I was with her in her last moments, and her last action was to place her mother's hand in mine—I answered her enquiring glance with an assurance that I would be a child to her mother. She was too weak to speak, but she turned her dying eyes from me to her, and sighed her last breath upon her bosom.

Lizzie lies beneath the shadow of a hawthorn bush, but the sun pierces its shade in the summer evenings; the wild birds sing there in the spring, and in the winter its red berries drop upon her lowly grave; and the birds hop upon the grassy mound, and the bright-eyed robins sit on the old branches and sing their cheerful song—and the little children as they go to church, walk softly around and whisper

“ Poor Lizzie !”

“ Sorrow breaks seasons, and reposing hours,
Makes the night morning, and the noontide night.”

CHAPTER VIII.

I loved him once! aye! with a woman's love,
Deep! fervent, true. Each thought was how to please
Him! each joy but brighten'd when I knew he'd
Share it—and now contempt has blotted out
Each other feeling—and yet I'm wrong, for
I forgive him, as his poor victim did—
I'll go and sit me by her grave and try
To pray for him.

THE loss of my favourite Lizzie and the knowledge of who had been her betrayer, was but the commencement of troubles. My darling Florence was seized with a fever then prevailing in the neighbourhood; and after days and nights of watching, our kind friend Dr. Stanely pronounced her out of danger.

My dear excellent father had gone from house to house, from bed to bed, uttering

words of comfort to some, words of exhortation to others.

Poor Lizzie's mother was the first victim to the fatal pestilence. My father, my dear dear father was the last. Even now in my old age my heart feels the crushing sorrow which almost bowed me to the grave. I knew not, until I had lost him, how much I loved him—how much he was revered—not a house but mourned as though they sorrowed over their own dead.

The new rector was received as though intruding on their grief; but he was not one to care for the love of our poor Moresdale people, so it passed unnoticed by him.

It was some months, however, before he took up his abode at the Parsonage, for he would not hear of our leaving until perfectly convenient to me, for although he lacked many things, yet Mr. Temple was a perfect gentleman.

I had very much to arrange, in which I

was assisted by our kind doctor and my friends at the Manor House. Each wished us to take up our abode with them, if only for a time, but I had been so entirely accustomed to my own home, that although I felt their kindness, and knew it to be sincere, yet I decided upon taking a pretty cottage belonging to Farmer Lyddon, and which commanded a view of the garden of the Parsonage, and the ivied church. Nothing but the love of my darling Florence could I think have roused me from the deep melancholy into which the loss of my father threw me. We had been so completely everything to each other, so constantly in each other's society, and he so amiable, so gentle, so consistently pious, that to be with him constantly was a high privilege, but I felt that I had my Florence to live for, to care for.

I thought much afterwards of what I did not notice at the time, or if I did, it was only to regret her helplessness, and to

gently lecture the dear girl upon the subject. But for the next two years my Florence rested so completely upon me that she appeared unable to think for herself, much less act. I was called upon on the most trifling occasions to give advice and assistance, and I am certain that the dear child found the only way to rouse me from the sadness becoming habitual, was to find me employment in waiting on her, mind and body. I never could bring the dear girl to confession. She declared the subject of her delinquencies made her flighty, and a kiss was the only rational reply I could get.

We were very glad to be able to retain our position amongst our dear poor. Mr. Temple was a single man, and very glad of our services.

Florence always declared Aunt Maude might have been Mrs. Temple if she had given the poor man a little encouragement.


Ah ! Miss Florence, you never brought me to confession ! you never knew that Mr.

Temple did ask me to become his wife. I think you suspected something, too, when he engaged a curate in such a hurry and started for the continent for a year's tour. Even now she looks rather amused at us when he leads me in to dinner if we meet at certain parties, for he never married, and after his return from abroad he took much more interest in his duties, and has been for years a fit successor to my dear father.

We had a great deal to do before we could take possession of our pretty cottage, for Farmer Lyddon was very kind, and allowed me to do just as I liked ; so I had the sunny parlour enlarged by throwing out a bow window, and a room built over the kitchens for the servant, for little Jenny had grown a strong, clever woman, and was to be our only one. Jim and his wife retired to a little cottage they had bought some years before, and they were constantly coming up to perform some loving office or another. We had a pretty sunny garden, which under

our joint care soon showed a new aspect, and Florence and I, before the Autumn, began to settle down in our new home.

I had my Florence's education to attend to, but she went twice a-week to her aunt's at the Manor House to take lessons in dancing and French of Mdlle. la Fayette. Thus we went on quietly till she was nearly sixteen, when a circumstance happened which somewhat for a time ruffled the quiet of our peaceful village. This was the finding a young gentleman supposed to have been wounded by an insane man. He was found in the wood behind the Manor House, and had received a pistol-shot in his side, and another had grazed his temple. The woman who saw the body flew screaming into the village, which was only a field from the spot. Fortunately Dr. Stanely was just starting on his pony, and seizing on the woman as she was passing him, unconscious in her fright that he was the very person required. Staying her. therefore, in his



strong grasp, although the impetus of her flight nearly brought him to the ground, he bawled out in his stentorian voice

“ Woman ! Dame Martin ! are you mad, or is any one else mad ? ”

The poor woman, unable to speak, looked at him for an instant, and then gradually the terrified expression faded from her countenance, and she exclaimed—

“ The Lord be good to us, doctor, but he is quite dead, they’ve murdered him outright.”

“ Dead ! murdered ! What does the woman mean ? ” gasped out the astonished doctor. “ Speak, woman, or I’ll shake the life out of you.”

Dame Martin did not seem much alarmed by this threat, but pointing to the wood, said, still trembling with terror,—

“ There, sir, there is a gentleman lying covered with blood ; he is murdered, sure enough.”

Dame Martin was a little slight woman, and lucky she was so, for Doctor Stanely,

without another word, threw his powerful arm around her waist, and fairly lugged her up before him. She seemed to understand him, for without a struggle she submitted to her fate, only saying,—

“Down by the big beech, sir.”

The pony did not much relish the double burden, but after twisting round and giving two or three plunges, he obeyed his master's voice and started off in the direction required, as though he did not care a straw about the matter.

As the doctor put the dame upon the ground, he said :—

“And now my good woman you shall have a bottle of physic to-night without charge, and if I have made you ill I'll attend you for a month gratis”

Dear, good man, as if he ever charged the poor anything !

The doctor raised the head of the young man, placed his hand upon his heart, and then joyfully exclaimed :—

“ Why you foolish woman, how dare you tell me the man is dead.”

Poor Dame Martin found relief in a flood of tears, but with a cheerful smile asked the doctor what she could do.

“ Do, indeed !” he replied, “ what can you do ! Here, take the man’s hat and bring me some water.”

This took not more than a minute, when the doctor bid her dash the whole in the man’s face as he held him. The young man uttered a faint sigh, but his head fell back again on the doctor’s arm.

“ There don’t stand looking like a fool, Dame Martin, but hunt for the wine.”

She seemed to understand this, too, for going to the pony, which stood looking on as though the case before him was quite worthy his contemplation, she returned with a small bottle of wine, some of which the doctor proceeded to pour into the wounded man’s mouth. This revived him, which put the doctor into excellent temper.

“ You have behaved very well, Dame Martin, and now you must away into the village, send the first man you meet. Stop, woman,” he shouted, as she was hurrying off, “ Let them pull down some one’s door and bring with them.”

“ Door indeed !” laughed Dame Martin to herself, “ I just fancy how he’d rave when he saw it—and couldn’t we know he meant a shutter !”

By the time the men returned with a shutter, which, on seeing, the doctor grimly smiled, and stroked his chin, and I am sure mentally dotted the dame down for a bottle of his housekeeper’s elder wine.

By the time, then, that the men reached the spot the young gentleman had so far revived as to open his eyes and try to smile faintly on his kind supporter, who forbid his attempting to speak. The poor doctor was now in a dilemma what to do next, for he well knew if he took home the wounded man, as he intended, his really worthy

housekeeper would never forgive him, that is, for ever and a day she would repeat the grievance in his hearing.

At this moment Florence's voice was heard carolling up one of the wood paths. Instantly he shouted out

"Florence—witch—madcap, come here."

A spasmodic twitch about the young gentleman's mouth, showed that in spite of the pain he must be suffering he felt a great inclination to laugh. This inclination caught the doctor's eye instantly, when he said:—"I tell you what, young man; laugh, and I drop your head instantly! and then you are done for." The youth closed his eyes, and only wished he could close his ears. But they opened almost instantly, for Florence bounding down the path, stood before them. On seeing the blood, she naturally turned very pale, but her's was not a constitution to faint. Without giving her time to speak, the doctor exclaimed. "Florence, we must take the youth to your

aunt's; no one else can take him in, and you have nothing else to do but to nurse him." The young gentleman endeavoured to speak, but Florence bending down, assured him, that nothing pleased her aunt so much, as showing kindness to those who wanted it; "and indeed we dare not disobey that dreadful man," glancing at the doctor, now grimly smiling.

A faint smile stole over the lips of the young gentleman, but Doctor Stanely silently motioned Florence away, and assisted the men to place the wounded youth on the shutter. Florence had but just time to explain all this to me, and hastily whisper,—"Put him in my room, aunt Maude; I can sleep with you." When they arrived, the young gentleman had fainted, and the doctor was looking, I thought, anxious. I silently led the way to Florence's room, and left the doctor and Dorcus, who was fortunately with us, to undress the wounded youth. Presently I was called for; I has-

tened up—I found he had recovered from his faint, but looking ghastly pale.

“Miss Maude,” said the doctor turning to me, as I approached the bed, “You have assisted me at many a case; have you nerve now?”

I silently assented. “What I want,” said Doctor Stanely, “is for you to keep this troublesome youth’s head in the same position it is now. Never mind what I am about; I do’nt want you to watch me, but him; moisten his lips with this,” pointing to a wine glass, “and if he faints, you mustn’t let him go off!”

Armed with these instructions, I took my stand by the poor young gentleman’s pillow, who uttered no groan, though I saw by his countenance, the mortal agony he suffered. I guessed the doctor was probing for the bullet; and I found I was right, for after what appeared to me a terrible long time, he suddenly exclaimed:—“I have the

rascal ! And now, young gentleman, you shall soon go to sleep."

The wound on his forehead proved to be nothing of consequence, but the poor fellow could not rest so calmly as we had hoped, and before night, fever was going on rapidly.

We knew not who he was, where he came from, or whither he was going ; we had not even heard him speak.

How he raved during that night of fever. Sometimes he appeared as though conversing with a beloved mother ; then he would speak rapidly in French—and then in English accents he would bitterly reproach some man, whom he designated only as Sir.

Doctor Stanely who was just leaving us for the night, returned hastily from the door to say that a lady was enquiring for me, and though so disguised he was pretty certain it was Mdle. La Fayette. Whilst I hastily descended the stairs I could

hear her sobs, and before I could reach our little sitting-room, Mdle. La Fayette, for it was she, rushed to meet me, and seizing my hands, almost frantically exclaimed :—" Is he dead? Is he dying? Oh! let me see my own—my own dear friend's child!"

" Compose yourself my dear Mdle. I trust the poor young gentleman, we were so fortunate as to be able to assist, will do well, Doctor Stanely gives us hopes."

She sank down upon the stairs and burst into a passionate fit of weeping. Florence, who was very fond of her, came down to us, and softly drew her head on her bosom, and soothed her as one would a weeping child. She evidently endeavoured to still her sobs, and at length succeeded. When I said—" Am I right in supposing that you know the friend of this unfortunate young gentleman?"

" Yes, yes," she said in a hurried and excited manner, " I know his father, and his mother I look upon as a second self."

She spoke English beautifully, with only

the pretty foreign accent to make it peculiar. "I am glad of that," I returned, for we were very anxiously thinking and planning how we could find out his friends.

"Oh ! I will do that," she said hastily, "I will let them know."

"Certainly," I answered, "I shall be only too happy to have the responsibility taken from myself."

She looked at me for a moment, and then rising, she put her arm round my neck and kissed my cheek in such a pretty caressing manner, that I could not resist her, for I had spoken coldly, thinking her manner strange, and perhaps a little ungrateful ; but however, we often, too often, get affronted without cause. I think when our feelings are so acute the least breath plays upon them like the night breeze upon the strings of the Eolian harp.

"Come," said I holding my hand, "come and see him." She trembled violently as I

led her into the room, and rushing up to the bed she threw herself upon her knees, and with all her country's ardour, lamented over her own, her precious Louis.

I looked at the doctor ; he was regarding the scene with his grimest smile, and with two strides he reached her side. " Mdlle." he said, " you know me ; if you cannot control your French madness, you had better leave, indeed you shall return home." His voice had the instant effect of stilling her passionate lamentations, and rising from her knees, she drew herself up with dignity.

" I had not noticed you before : but you are quite right Doctor Stanely," she said. " Pardon me, I will not forget myself again—but—" her lips quivered as she looked at the bed. The doctor took her hand kindly in his.

" My dear Mdlle. La Fayette," he said, " it is plain to be seen that you have

a great regard for this young gentleman. I have occasion to know that you can be a good nurse, as good and attentive a nurse as any Sister of Charity." Mdlle. started, but the doctor continued: "If you will compose yourself you may be of great use to us, of essential benefit to this young gentleman. Can you sit up with him?"

"That is my wish," she said: "and I will follow your orders if you will allow me to remain."

She spoke gently, in her natural tone of voice; the young man seemed to notice it, he grew calmer, and then she bent over him using every tone of endearment the heart could pour forth. He became perfectly still and at length dropped to sleep holding her hand, as she continued to chant in a monotonous tone fragments of French songs. I followed the doctor down stairs, and asked him earnestly:—"What do you think of this, Doctor Stanely?"

“ My good little Maude,” he answered
“ don’t bother yourself or me ; send that
chit to bed,” pointing to pale Florence,
“ and you go likewise ; Mrs. Dorcus will sit
up to-night, and you are not wanted.” So
saying, he shook hands with me, kissed
Florence’s pale cheek and left us.

CHAPTER IX.

A kinder, franker, nobler heart
Ne'er won a smile from me,
And in his glance so free and clear
A guileless breast you'd see.

In truth he was one formed to love.
And to be loved indeed !
And when he should a captive take
She'd ne'er wish to be free'd.

THE Autumn morn broke chill and gloomy
—the mists hung dull over the landscape—
the poor flowers bent down their despairing
heads, and the bushes and brown boughs of
the trees drooped heavy with moisture. But
we had something to cheer us. The fire
burned brightly, and the breakfast looked
most cosy as we entered our pretty room
and found our good old friend ready to
greet us.

“ Two lazy lie-a-beds,” said he, advancing

with an outstretched hand for both. "I need not ask how you are, rosy-cheek," patting Florence's head as he spoke.

"I know your patient is better," said Florence, "or you would not look so good-tempered."

"Am I ever bad-tempered, you little vixen?" he asked.

"Not bad-tempered," said Florence, "only a little put about!"

The doctor laughed and took a seat at the table, saying:—

"I have only ten minutes to spare; so make the tea, child, and don't chatter."

The tea was made, and the doctor told us that Mr. Danville had passed a very good night; that his fever had abated, and his wounds were doing well.

"Is Mdlle. la Fayette still with him?" I asked.

"Yes," said the doctor, "and likely to stay. I am taken in to ride over to the Manor house and ask permission for her to

remain till to-morrow, but I shall give a hint, I shall expect an extension of leave, for I think, poor thing, she will require a little rest herself, and you are not strong enough to turn to-night nursing whatever you may do by day."

"Florence, I am sure will do what she can to assist," said I.

"Florence shall do no such thing," said he, mimicking my voice. "I do not want my patient's fever increased."

I shook my head at him, and Florence gazed in astonishment.

"Well!" he said, returning her look with a knowing nod. "Well miss, what do you stare at. Ah! I see by your ready blush you understand me, so remember, if my patient gets any increase of fever, you shall take a draught as well as your victim."

"When I take that fever, Dr. Stanely, I'll not come to you to cure me," said poor Florence, laughing, "you are too rough."

“Good bye! take care of the boy between you, and never mind an old fellow like me.”

“He’s a dear, good old man,” said Florence, looking out of the window after him.

“Yes,” I said, “a friend of many years, and tender and kind when needed. I never knew him leave his patients but twice all the long years he has lived here.”

“And when was that?” asked Florence.

“Both at the request of the Earl of Clanricarde,” I answered.

“I wonder when he will return to the castle!” said Florence. “Is he handsome, aunt Maude?”

“Yes,” said I. Something in my voice made the dear girl regard me with an enquiring look, but she made no remark, and I left the room to visit Mdlle. la Fayette and her patient.

I found Mr. Darville looking deadly pale, but the fever had left him, and although too weak to speak, reason had resumed her sway, and a faint pleasing smile lit up his

countenance as he held out his trembling hand to me as I drew near his bed.

“Louis is better,” said Mdlle., softly smoothing back his black thick hair, which hung in heavy masses on his broad brow.

He seemed to receive her attentions with evident pleasure, leaning his cheek upon her little hand. I had never noticed the beauty of it until then, but it was perfect in shape and colour. I think I have never particularly described Mdlle. la Fayette otherwise than graceful, which most of her countrywomen are. She could not be drawn to more advantage than at that moment, for she still continued to look as youthful as an Englishwoman would have done at her age, for she must have been about thirty-six. Her hair, which was of a superb black, had not a single grey one ; she wore it much off her forehead, very carelessly dressed, with really I know not what to call it, a cap or turban it certainly was not, something of black hue, put on in a way a Frenchwoman only could.

Her brow and eyes, I glanced on her then, and on the youth on whom she was gazing with a look of boundless love, as he lifted his eyes to hers the resemblance was perfect, and I could not help saying :—

“ Surely you must be related, I never saw such a resemblance in my life.”

Louis Darville took no notice, she merely said in a low sad voice,—

“ Yes, Louis is nearly related to me, and it was to see me he came to England. Ah ! dear Louis, you must do so no more.”

Louis pressed his lips to her hand, and she bent and kissed his brow.

I thought to myself you may be nearly related, but I am afraid you love him too much for your peace. Surely so young a man would never think of you for his wife.

My thoughts were so engrossed upon this subject that I had almost forgotten the chief purpose of my visit.

“ Will you leave your friend in my charge, Mdle.,” I said. “ Dr. Stanely has

insisted on your taking some rest, or you will unfit yourself for your duties."

"Ah! my duties," returned Mdle., fondly gazing on Louis and sighing. I must soon return to the Manor House."

"Do not think of that at present," I said, "I have a plan in my mind which I think will release you for a week or two."

"And will you permit me to remain here?" she said, energetically taking my hand and fixing her fawn-like eyes on mine, "Ah! you cannot think how dear he is to me."

"Certainly," I said "we shall feel very much obliged if you will remain and assist us to nurse Mr. Darville, it must be so much pleasanter to him to have a friend near, than being so entirely surrounded by strangers.


Again the most passionate glance of love flashed from her eyes, and she bent and again kissed his brow. I silently wished she would not make such an open display of her affection, it was so unlike everything

I had imagined of her. The young gentleman submitted to her caresses, evidently with pleasure. There was an affection in his manner, but not so ardent as hers.

I had ordered my room to be prepared for her, and I now accompanied her to it, begging she would not disturb herself, that she should be called in time for dinner, and that everything should be done for the young gentleman, the same as though he were my own brother.

“God bless you,” she said, “I am very grateful, dear Louis!” and with the name on her lips and a smile of heartfelt love upon her whole countenance she fell asleep, for she would not undress, but cast herself upon the bed evidently utterly worn out from fatigue and excitement.

As she lay thus wrapped in a profound slumber, I could not but notice the extreme beauty of her mouth and nose, her usual colour had fled her cheek, and she looked like some beautiful marble figure of repose



The small rounded chin, pouting lips, and Grecian nose were perfect. I left the room with a deeper interest in my heart for her than I ever supposed I could have felt. Before I returned to the room of our guest, I knew he was not alone—for I had sent Jenny to sit by him, Dorcus having been persuaded by Mdlle. la Fayette to lie down as soon as they had finished their breakfast, —knowing he was not alone, I sought out Florence, who was in the kitchen making a tart for dinner, this being in those days a very necessary accomplishment for young ladies.

There I found my rosebud with her neat little apron on, and her pretty hands covered with flour.

“ I knew you would come, aunt Maude, so I left the apples for you to pare,” she said gaily as I entered.

“ You dainty Miss,” said I, taking up the knife and clean white cloth placed for me to put on my lap. “ You dainty Miss,

I understand you ; you don't like to stain your fingers with the apple-juice. Well, what are you doing ?”

“ Making some of your favourite biscuits, aunt Maude. I thought the poor young gentleman might fancy them.”

“ That's my good child,” said I, “ and you shall help me make some jelly to-morrow, I know farmer Lyddon killed a calf yesterday, Jenny shall run over there and ask him to spare me the feet.”

“ I am sure he will,” answered Florence, “ but you can scarcely spare her ; suppose I go, it will be a nice run across the fields, and I want to speak to Susy.”

“ Do so,” I said, for I had my thoughts so busily engaged I answered rather absently.

“ Are you not well, aunty ?” she asked, stooping to look into my face.

“ Quite well, my darling, but I am thinking how happy you might make poor Mdlle. if you would not dislike giving up a few hours for the next fortnight.”

“ Oh ! I will do anything, but I fancy,” she continued, laughing, “ what a fine stately governess I shall make—and then dancing days ! just fancy aunt ; now young ladies ! One, two, three, four, drop !” and she commenced gliding about the kitchen counting with mock dignity with her floured hands held out before her, her morning frock pinned up behind, and her little foot absurdly pointed.

I could not help laughing as I said

“ My dear Florence will you do this for Mdlle. and me ?”

“ For you ! you dear little aunty, I will do anything in the world for you !” and round my neck went those loving naughty arms.

“ Florence ! you naughty, careless child. I daresay I am covered with flour.”

“ Only the least bit in the world, aunt. One or two whiffs and 'tis gone. There now, it is all right, and I am going to be

steady," resuming her labours with the process of biscuit making.

"Do you think Miss Dora will let me give the lessons? aunt Dora! I am rather afraid of aunt Dora, but I'll try; the girls I am sure will be so good. I will go from Farmer Lyddon's and propose."

"Which of your aunts do you intend proposing to, Florence?"

"Oh! to aunt Dora, I am sure of aunt Emily before I ask her."

I shook my fingers at her and continued my task.

"Do you think this poor young gentleman is related to Mdlle. la Fayette?" she asked, after we had continued for some time silent.

"She says they are," I answered, "and I think there is a great likeness, and she says she loves him very much, Florence."

"Then she must be his aunt, depend upon it she is his aunt."

This seemed not unlikely, but then why not say so ; I did not reveal my thoughts of another kind of attachment between them. It is sad enough for those advancing in life to feel suspicious of the motives of those around them. Let then the youthful preserve their confidence in the goodness of others till the veil is torn from their mental vision. Seek not to destroy it shade by shade, thought by thought. The poison of confidence betrayed comes, alas ! too soon. Spare the light-heartedness of youth as long as possible. The mildew of suspicion will fall, alas ! only too soon.

Florence left me quite certain of the relationship of Mdle. la Fayette and Louis Darville. Louis was asleep when I entered the room. I dismissed Jenny to her duties, and sitting down by the window in Florence's little low chair, I worked for some time deep in my musings on the past.

More than an hour must have thus passed, when I was roused by a slight movement

from the bed, I looked up and met the gaze of my poor patient.

"I have been watching you for some time, Mrs. Middleton," he said. "How much happiness you ladies must find in work which we poor fellows know nothing about."

"Yes!" I said, "our fingers are often employed when our thoughts are afar off. I think it does add to our happiness, it keeps us quiet."

He would have answered me, but I saw the hectic brought upon his cheek even by the few words he had spoken, so I forbade his speaking. I gave him some cooling mixture, and he looked gratefully at me when I rearranged his pillows, and after watching the monotonous movement of my fingers dropped off once more in a sweet soft slumber.

Thus wore away the day, and twilight was deepening when the announcement of dinner and Mdle., made their appearance together.

Louis, who was awake, insisted on her joining us, and after a few tender attentions she consented to do so. Dr. Stanely, true to his promises, joined us just as we reached the dining-room, accompanied by Florence, whom he informed us he had found sentimentalizing in the muddy lanes.

"Bestowing my tender admiration on these, if you please, Dr. Stanely," holding up for my admiration a bunch of beautiful bell leaves, delicately shaded with the Autumn tints.

"Pray give them to me for Louis," said Mdlle. la Fayette, "he is so fond of flowers, leaves, any of nature's offerings, and poor fellow, I am sure they will be doubly welcome now."

"What, you want to give the boy a rheumatic fever, do you?" exclaimed the doctor, "taking damp leaves into his room."

"Stay," said Florence, "I will air them first: sit down to the table if you please, Miss Florence," said the doctor, "and do

not be so flippant when the science of pharmacology is the subject of conversation."


"Ah!" said Florence, "I must say, when you come to hard words, I be 'disturbed,' as Dame Martin says."

"Dame Martin is my especial favourite, for ever more," said the doctor, bestowing on his favourite Florence one of his peculiar grimaces, "her conduct was wonderful for a woman: she actually obeyed me without talking about it!"

"That was the kind woman who found Louis, was it not?" asked Mdlle. La Fayette.

"The same," returned Doctor Stanely. "Do you know how the young gentleman came by his wounds?" earnestly regarding her as he asked the question. She attempted to answer, but her voice failed her, and every particle of colour faded from her face.

"Do not tell more than you like," said the doctor, with what I thought a very peculiar emphasis. Mdlle. raised those



fawn-like eyes in silence to his, and received the glass of wine which he handed to her, with great emotion. A silence followed this singular scene, and soon after, Mdlle. requested permission to retire to the room of the invalid.

“ Poor Mdlle.” said Florence as she left the room, “ she does not understand you as we do ; you must not speak so abruptly to her.”

“ Mdlle. understands me much better than you do, Miss Florence,” said Doctor Stanely.

“ Doctor,” said I suddenly : “ You and Mdlle. La Fayette have met before ?”

“ Really, my dear Miss Maude, you are a most sagacious lady ; I begin to be almost afraid of you. I hope you do not think I shot the poor fellow in a jealous fit !”

I saw he wished to wave the subject, therefore I made no further observation, save by a little nod, which he understood

to mean :—" I hold my own opinion still !"

The bunch of leaves had been taken to Louis, but without being dried, as Florence had wickedly proposed ; and as we entered, Mdle. was arranging them with an artist's eye, blending their graceful forms and lovely tints with pleasing effect. As the doctor and I entered, Louis—for somehow we all called him so—Louis held out his hand to the doctor, thanking him more by looks than words for his skill and kindness.

Strange thoughts and suspicions entered my mind, as I watched the softened expression of the doctor's countenance as he sat by the side of his patient, and the interested and yet scrutinizing glances with which he watched every motion or word of Mdle. I felt ashamed of these new emotions, they were to me new emotions, for I had never before been placed in any situation where there was such a display of mystery. But here there certainly was.

I could not think ill of my dear old

friend—I had no cause to do so of Mdlle. She had lived for nearly eight years amongst us, loved and respected. Think ill of that noble, beautiful face, that pale cheek, and deep earnest eyes. Poor young gentleman ! I am sure there is nothing there to mistrust, though some mystery, so I must wait and trust.

This reasoning did not quite satisfy me ; trust this stranger, I thought again, merely because he has a handsome face, deep earnest eyes, and a truthful countenance. “ Well ! ” thought I at last, “ I am not the first woman who trust in such evidences, and I shan’t be the last. I would rather think good than evil of them, and would rather be deceived twenty times than mis-judge once.

So with this woman’s philosophy I went about my usual occupations, Florence to everyone’s pleasure and approbation, walked every morning to the Manor House to play the governess. And very useful she made

herself, and indeed her aunts were much surprised at the useful knowledge with which her young mind was stored. But could it be otherwise when she had been the companion of my dear father, whose conversation was so charming and instructive. Like some deep river, ever winding its way amid rich pasture lands, or rocky slopes, enriching itself with all around, and bestowing as it calmly passed along, its accumulated treasures on all within its influence.

I have no doubt had my Florence been obliged to make use of her acquirements for a home, many would have been glad to have entrusted their little ones to her careful training, but that was not needed.

Though not rich, I had a sufficient income for both of us, and my brother's share was placed out on good interest, and I had been for some years adding to the principal.

I did not much understand business, but our good friend, Dr. Stanely, managed these little matters for me. So when it pleased

God to take me home, my Florence would not want for an earthly one.

I was employed with these thoughts one morning when Mdlle. la Fayette came into the room.

Nearly three weeks had glided away, Louis had gradually become domesticated amongst us. Indeed he almost seemed one of us, so amiable, gentle, and confiding was his manner, that I had forgotten to look upon him as a stranger. I had been expecting Mddle. would soon propose returning to her duties, therefore I did not feel surprised when she said that Louis was so far recovered as not to require any assistance, and that she was anxious to release Florence from the labour she had so kindly and so ably performed.

I spoke the truth when I answered her, "that Florence had received great pleasure in having been of use to her aunts and in enabling her to devote herself to her friend's child."

She pressed my hand, but there was a wistful anxious look in her eyes which made me say,

“ I hope you do not feel that a return to the Manor House will be burdensome to you.”

“ It is for my Louis’s sake,” she said, “ therefore I endure it joyfully.”

She must have seen the look of surprise on my face, for drawing her chair close to mine, she said earnestly,—

“ Good, kind Miss Middleton, I have seen that you view my affection for Louis with some suspicion ! but trust us a little longer. I may say thus that your—indeed—our excellent friend, Dr. Stanely, approves of my conduct, and is in my entire confidence, and I trust the time is not far distant when I can throw off this mystery and explain all the circumstances of my sad life !”

I know I still gazed on her troubled countenance with my mind doubtful and

unsatisfied, for a tear rose to her eyes and a slight flush flitted over her pale cheek.

“ I am most grateful to you,” she said, “ for your great kindness, and to your dear amiable Florence, for enabling me to enjoy the happiness of having been the nurse and companion of my dear Louis.”

I slightly shook my head.

“ You will trust us ! I am sure you will,” she said, anxiously.

I looked into those fawn-like eyes, how troubled ! yet how good ; how gentle ; how confiding was their expression. I placed my hand on hers, which pressed tremblingly on my arm.

“ I trust you fully !” I said, “ But think before you marry a man so many years younger than yourself.”

She started with an amused look.

“ I assure you such a thought never entered our imaginations. Louis loves me very dearly, but the love he would feel for

a wife is given to another. Yes! I am pretty sure of it, although he has not told me so. Ah!" she exclaimed with her soft musical laugh, "See, he has been to meet Florence, they are crossing the lawn."

I watched the two.

They were in animated conversation; she tamed her light fleet step to his still feeble one. His dark eyes were bent on hers, but she saw not their expression of passionate admiration, for her look was on some autumn flowers she had in her hand.

I began now to wish he was well enough to leave us, for as I understood from Mdlle. la Fayette his affections were engaged, and if my Florence should unfortunately allow his charming society to create too great an interest in her heart. Alas! the past rose up before me—my darling, my precious Florence must not know the bitterness of crushed affection!

The quiet happiness of my life seemed again suddenly to be invaded.

I turned my look from them to Mdlle. la Fayette.

Her soft countenance was radiant with calm happiness, and she seemed unconsciously to utter—"Louis!"

The sound caught his attention; he looked up and kissed his hand to her, and bowed to me with the ease and grace of his country.

That passing glance!

Alas! poor heart, by thy quick throb I feel I never could love another.

That passing glance! that radiant look! Oh memory! memory! why should this stranger thus recall the past, and wear the look which stole my girlish heart.

Still I heard their young voices in merry glee, and their light laughter ringing on the autumn air as I withdrew to my room to think. But my thoughts would not arrange themselves, and the more I endeavoured to do so the more perplexed they became. At last I determined not to trust in an arm of flesh. I implored the Lord's help in our

walk of life ; I entrusted my darling to His guidance, and happier and calmer I felt then, and better able to trust in past events ; and though their light laughter had somewhat pained me before, and I pictured my Florence's fading hopelessly away, yet now with my calmed feelings it sounded very sweetly as I descended the stairs to join them at the dinner-table.

CHAPTER X.

The old, old times I love to think
On manners brave and true,
When the grey haired, kind domestics
Lived their whole lives through with you.

As little ones you played around
The old oak on the green,
And amid the forest rambling
Your humble friend was seen.

Protectors then they grew in life,
'Mid sorrow and 'mid joy,
The grey haired man, your humble friend,
Was your playmate when a boy.

A shadow fell athwart her girlish path,
Her walk ere this had all been sunshine.

Louis Danville has been gone some months, where he was going to, he did not say—at least he did not tell me ; but I fancy our friend Doctor Stanely knew. Louis had spent a few weeks with him ; but I was rather annoyed by his constant visits at our

little cottage. He always had some message from the doctor ; or a new piece of music to try over with Florence, or some book just received, and which he wished my opinion on. He played well on the flute, and had a most charming voice which had been highly cultivated. He certainly improved Florence's style of singing and playing, but I felt uneasy, for I knew how soon the affections are entangled. After much thought, I spoke to the doctor on the subject, but he laughed exceedingly, and said :—" Louis is going soon."

So really? though I was becoming very fond of him, I was glad when the morning came when we saw the last of Louis Danville. I noticed that for some time after his departure, my Florence was not so light-hearted as usual; and her cheek had lost somewhat of its beautiful bloom, and she became listless in all she did. So one morning, I contrived to bring the conversation round to the events of the last autumn,

and then spoke of my conversation with Mdlle. La Fayette and of her having told me Louis's affections were engaged. Florence made no remark, and I would not look at her ; but busied myself with dropping some stitches of my knitting : so I had an excuse for my silence. Presently, Florence rose, and without speaking, she took my knitting out of my hand to set it to rights, and returned it, kissing my cheek as she did so.

I understood her, and the subject was not renewed between us ; but I was glad to see that my darling became more lively, and it was with much pleasure that I heard from Doctor Stanely that his niece Ellen Trevor was coming to reside with him. We had not seen her since she was a child : she was Florence's senior by three years, and we both looked forward with some little degree of excitement to her arrival.

Thus it was that I was interrupted one lovely July evening, in what my saucy Florence called,—“one of my reveries !”

When saddened and thoughtful I reclined in my easy chair, the past and the present mingling in my day dreams. The song of the birds, the soft rustle of the leaves, as they were stirred by a light breeze which had sprung up after a sultry day, and the incessant hum of the industrious bees, pleasantly lulled me ; and I might have found a deeper repose—or as Florence would have expressed it :—“ Have been caught napping !” But the little lady was not one of the sleepy tribe, and her voice roused me as she slily crept to my chair. “ Aunt Maude, dear little aunt Maude, up and be doing ; the sun will soon set, and we have a long way to go.”

“ Indeed Florence my pet, I am very tired, where can you possibly think of going to-night ?”

“ Night ! Aunt Maude ; why it wants hours to sun-set !”

I could not help laughing at Florence’s look of astonishment.

“ I am glad to see you can laugh aunt of mine ; I began to think you had had the fairies with you.”

“ They only come on moon-light nights, Florence.”

“ True,” said Florence, “ and we may chance to see something of them, for I am going to take you to meet Ellen, and we shall return by moon-light.”

“ When did Ellen come ?” I asked : “ I thought she was not expected until next week.

“ I have just received a note from her,” said Florence, “ she came last night ; but I see by your face you are going to refuse— ’tis no use, aunt Maude, I cannot go without you.”

“ Why cannot you go alone, my dear ?” I asked.

“ I am not to be trusted, aunt Maude, it is not proper for me to be wandering about by myself, so you must go.”

“How long since you decided upon behaving with so much discretion,” I asked.

“Ever since I wished for you as a companion aunty.”

“Well, but I really cannot walk home Florence.”

“Fie! how lazy you grow aunty, but let me see,” counting on her fingers, “what has made you so tired?—First you fed the poultry because I was too long at my harp this morning; and then you gathered the flowers, and then——”

“Stop! stop! Florence: if you begin to enumerate all my doings to-day, I am afraid it will be but a poor amount of industry: I am quite ready to accompany you.”

“Now you are a dear good little fairy!” she exclaimed, “indeed, you grow so small and thin, I might promise to bring you back in a large basket.”

“I should not like to trust to such a promise,” I answered; “but I fancy we

shall be sent back in the doctor's little chaise."

"So we can," said Florence, "for if he is called out in the evening, he always prefers the pony, besides Ellen must promise to come to us to-morrow."

"Surely Florence she would not like to leave her uncle so soon?"

"Oh! he must fetch her in the evening, or perhaps he will dine with us."

"But why are you so anxious for Ellen to come to-morrow?" I asked.

"Ah! aunt Maude! aunt Maude! have you forgotten? but I see you have: I am eighteen to-morrow, aunt Maude!"

"My darling child! to think I had really forgotten! your grandpapa would never have forgotten his darling's birthday."

"Dear grandpapa!" said Florence, stooping to kiss away a tear which had fallen on my cheek, at the mention of one I had been thinking of all day, "It is a long, long time since we lost him Florence."

“ Not lost, dear aunt ; only gone home before us.”

“ You are right my child ; it ought to be a subject of rejoicing that he is safe in bliss, and that he was taken with so little suffering in his last illness.”

The mention of my beloved father seemed to cast from me the sadness which had been creeping over me the last few hours, and I was surprised to feel how little wearied I was, as we sauntered down the lane leading from our pretty cottage. As we proceeded, the breeze freshened, bringing with it the sweet scent of the new mown hay, the delicious perfume of the luxuriant woodbine, and numerous fragrant wildflowers.

On our way we ascended a little eminence to obtain a view of the castle

The setting sun gilded its beautiful windows, and played on its ivied turrets. The lake shone with its reflected rays, and on its calm bosom glided the graceful swans.

"It is a long time since we have been to the castle," said Florence.

We had been standing so long in silence that her voice startled me, my thoughts had gone back to the days of my youth, when I had often stood on that same spot with one I then loved, but one I could not even now respect.

"I think we must go soon," I answered, "I want to see Mrs. Maitland. She has not been well lately, I hear."

"She is a perfect picture!" said Florence. "I know not which is the whitest, her hair, apron, or handkerchief."

"Yes!" I said, "she is a pattern of neatness, honesty, and uprightness. She has been in the employ of the Clinricardes from a child."

"Where is Lord Clinricarde living?" asked Florence.

"I believe in Italy, but for some years no one here seems to know anything about him."

“ Is he married ?” asked Florence.

“ I believe not, and the title will become extinct—the estates go to a distant relation, a Miss Grant—but come, if we linger thus we shall not arrive in time for tea.”

There had been some talk of Dr. Stanely's giving up his practice and residing with his niece in London, but no sooner was it whispered abroad than his house was beset. Mothers brought their children whose lives his skill had saved ; husbands waylaid him in his rounds, whose wives he had been the means of restoring to them ; and last, though not least in determination, was my merry Florence, who actually locked the room-door and kept the doctor a prisoner until he promised never to leave Moresdale unless for a tour or a visit. The doctor declared when the subject was spoken of, that he was starved into submission. He certainly seemed to enjoy his dinner famously afterwards, but I think that must have been owing to the war of words kept up between him and Florence

during the half-hour in which he remained a prisoner, and his fair goaler watching him outside the window. However, Ellen came to her uncle when he would not go to her.

Our good old friend was somewhat eccentric, it was during the war in India, when it raged in all its fury, that he named his residence Oriental Cottage.

On each side of the gate was erected a figure in a turban. Each waved a monstrous tulwar, and grinned defiance.

Florence always declared that the doctor intended them for Hyder and his son, Tippoo Sahib, and that they were saluting each other in the true eastern style.

The Doctor's Study.

This spot was always a scene of contention between them. She persisted in naming it the Den of Horrors! He styled it The Abode of the Sages.

Perhaps my saucy Florence looked on one side—our dear old friend on the other.

On one side—certainly Florence's—hung

the skeleton of a large cat, which had once upon a time killed and would have eaten the doctor's favourite canary bird.

Five or six snakes embottled. Victims of the doctor's valour.

The skeleton of a monstrous dog, which said animal had died of hydrophobia, after biting several others in the village, and causing a dearth of doggies for a time. But I recollect the doctor shot him, but there he hung suspended from the ceiling, in the midst of toads, vipers, lizards, &c., &c.

Then the bottles ! bottles of all sizes and shapes, with the dust of unnumbered years upon them. The doctor always declared that he could number them, and date the time when each had last been used.

But incredulous Florence never could be persuaded to listen.

Boxes with dead leeches in them ; bottles with live ones. Little drawers half out and half in. But I could not describe the twentieth part. Turn we to the doctor's side.

An easy chair, minus an arm ! Three or four pairs of boots, or rather boots, not pairs ! Slippers ! and comforters innumerable. All the work of his tormentor, Florence.

A huge book-shelf, as Florence said, crammed to excess. Books with good bindings ; some with torn but most without any. Periodicals, rolled, torn, folded, scrunched. A bust of Socrates, several unknown ; one without a nose, one minus an eye ; all soiled, dusty and mutilated. I certainly did enter into Florence's idea of soap and water whenever I peeped in, much to her delight and the doctor's pretended indignation.

How quietly the good old man enjoyed our laughing at his oddities. We always knew when some wonder had been added to the Den of Horrors, by his cheerful " Well ladies, when are you going to pay the retreat of the Sages a visit ?"

Often have I seen him pass down our avenue on a wet evening, for it was a short cut from his cottage to the village, and he

would frequently take it when pressed for time. Often have I seen him waving his hand should he see any of us at the windows, his pony trotting at full speed, as though his worthy master might be caught trespassing. The gate always gave a peculiar bound after him as it never bestowed upon any other person. Florence well knew the signal, and said "Tumbler kicked viciously at the offending gate as he passed."


However, the signal was never heard without Florence flying to the window, if in a front room, and was generally in time to return the salute of her kind and indulgent old friend. Away he goes, his huge boots rattling and clattering ; his little portmanteau of goodies strapped safely before him. In this he carried both medicine and wine, for as he said, "Many a poor body has been saved, at least half cured by having the remedies immediately !" and I fancy other commodities have often found their way into his portmanteau, if we might surmise from

his old housekeeper's grumblings at various disappearings of sundry cold fowls, puddings, &c. Mysterious as it may appear, I have not unfrequently seen such luxuries at the bed-side of many a poor cottager, whose chief ailment was a want of such delicate food as this good friend would bring them.

Off would ride the doctor with his monstrous great coat carefully buttoned over his chest and tucked round his knees, whilst the tails were flying like two streamers behind. His hat often fastened on by a large red handkerchief, and one of Florence's comforters rolled round his neck, up to the very tip of his nose.

Peace be to thy memory, good old man : the friend of the widow and fatherless.

I know not which enjoyed this wintry ride most, Tumbler or his master. No matter through a flock of geese, a mud-pond, or over a hedge, Tumbler never tumbled down, and the doctor never tumbled off. Nothing ever came amiss to the doctor. He fed the



mother, or washed the baby, and I once found him—but this he never would allow—making the caudle. Blessed is thy memory, thou kindest of men !

If the nurse did not come in time he was both nurse and doctor, and if no clergyman knelt at the bed of death—no need—verily Dr. Stanely thou wert a man of God.

When he died Florence and I planted one beautiful moss rose-tree by his tomb.

I often visit it, and have done so for years. When the flowers fade I strew the leaves around, that like his good deeds, they may flit hither and thither and carry sweetness to many a desolate spot.

I was glad Ellen had come to stay with him. It might only be for a short time, but still I was glad, for I fancied our good friend had looked less gay and cheery than usual for the last few months, and I hoped her presence would do him good in the way of bracing up his generally lively spirits.

Ellen Trevor's little history deserves a

chapter for itself, so I will just mention that our arrival gave us all pleasure.

The two girls wandered off after tea, no doubt to enjoy their own chat and relate the wonderful events which had occurred since they last met. Wonderful I dare say they thought many things they looked coolly on in after life, and smiled at their ardent feelings which had then so embellished them, but I uttered no word that could destroy the illusion.

I always felt sorry when the bright musings of youthful fancy was dulled and saddened by an unnecessary display of the experience of the aged.

No life can pass without its brightness fading—its light-heartedness wearing. Let then the youthful revel in the passing joy of their own innocent imaginings.

If the picture is too vividly painted, be sure time will dull the colours without the aid of your brush.

Oh ! youth, youth ! enjoy the present in

innocent happiness. Let the light foot dance in the unchecked joy of their morning sunshine, and their musical laughter ring cheerily from their hearts' melody. It is cheering even in age to look back upon the bright spots of our youth ; to ramble in fancy again amid the past.

God has given to all happiness and joyful hours, alas ! too often unregarded until time has passed his half-effacing finger over their brightness. How often do we look back upon the loving action ; the fond word ; the tender look, and the unselfish motive of those loved ones, gone ! gone for ever ! But yet 'tis brightening to our aged hearts to remember such has been ; that we have loved and been beloved ; that we have received affectionate offices, and returned them. Mysterious trials ! we cannot understand now ! but a time shall come when the veil shall be withdrawn, and we shall see God as he is, all love, all mercy.

No trial had been unnecessary ; no separa-

tion unneeded ; no bed of pain but what was necessary to bring us to Him.

Oh that we could enjoy the bright beams and glorious flowers in our path without trembling and doubting when He brings the blast and the shadow. But there is one who feels for our weakness, and intercedes when our stricken hearts falter and fail.

My good old friend had enjoyed the brightness of his life, God had blessed him with a kind heart and sanguine temperament, and as he passed along his path of life he had cheered many a glowing heart, and raised many a drooping spirit 'Trust, trust Him !' was his constant theme.

The cloud overshadows you ! but God is behind it.

Withdraw not yourself from Him ! He never withdraws Himself from you.

And now came his day of suffering, when the spirits sank, and faith was doubly needed.

All who loved him, and who did not, from the humble hut upon the desolate moor, to



the lordly castle on Forest Hill ! All offered him loving sympathy ; the bright look and cheery welcome ; his own home brightened by the presence of his beloved Ellen. Yes, he felt the blessing, for as I entered the room his usual kind and happy smile came upon his countenance, and as he pressed my hand he said :—

“ I trusted in Him ! and he has not left me desolate.”

CHAPTER XI.

She had performed her woman's duty ! A
Woman's duty ? yes, to meet with gentle
Tenderness, the ills of life ; to meekly bear
The cold neglect, the fiery word, and worse,
The cruel taunt from those she loved, or fain
Would love—
To still unseen the tremblings of
Her breast, and quench the burning tear, which rose
From the pained pressure of her bruised heart.
She had done this ! and more, what woman has
Not ? At least one who deserves the name !


ELLEN TREVOR'S history was not uninteresting to those who loved her.

Her father, a merchant of considerable eminence, had failed from some too daring speculation, leaving her mother almost in poverty, with herself, then a child ten years of age.

Ellen inherited more of her father's energy of character than her mother's soft

yielding disposition. And well it was so for her in after trials, unfortunately Mrs. Trevor's loveliness again attracted a suitor, and she became the wife of a man noted for his gambling propensities. Some friends informed her of his character, and advised her not to entrust her own and child's happiness to such a man, who would little heed the calm delight of a domestic life. She listened, wept, and promised to give him up; but at the next interview with her admirer she informed him of what she had heard, and gave up the name of the informers. The consequence was a fearful quarrel between the parties—her marriage hastily arranged—and her husband's refusal to allow her to continue her intimacy with her former friends. This even extended to her only brother, Dr. Stanely.

The doctor wrote an angry letter to his sister and her husband, but offered to adopt his niece if her mother would part with her. But Mrs. Harcourt was too weak a character




to make any self-sacrifices, even for those she loved, and she refused to part with her little girl.

Poor Ellen ! her trials commenced from the day of her mother's hasty marriage.

Mr. Harcourt was a rash, selfish, angry-tempered man, expecting the willing obedience of all with whom he came in contact ; insisted where he could enforce, and quarrelled with those who were free from his power.

The life of a woman could not be happy with such a man, and poor Mrs. Harcourt meekly, though peevishly, bent under the storm. She lived to become the mother of two sickly, cross boys, when, to the surprise and indignation of her husband, death freed her from the misery of his control.

Ellen was now fourteen, and her kind uncle went instantly to London, where Mr. Harcourt resided, to bring her back to his lone and quiet home. But Mr. Harcourt knew her value too well to permit her to



reside with her uncle, and he knew also that her mother had extorted a promise from her not to leave her brothers as long as they required her care.

Ellen was allowed to return with her uncle for a few weeks—indeed her health required a change, and Dr. Stanely would never have allowed her to resume her duties for her cross sickly brothers had not her happiness depended upon her fulfilling the promise made to her dying mother.

It is needless to enter into all Ellen Trevor's trials for the next six years.

She became the nurse, governess, and friend of her little brothers, both cross, sickly, unloving boys.

In teaching them she taught herself, assisted sometimes by a cousin of Mr. Harcourt's.

Charles Harcourt was the reverse of his cousin—honourable, high-spirited, brave to a fault, but withal tender-hearted, as any man need be. He was not exactly hand-

some, but he possessed what I always notice goes far to gain the affections of a true-hearted woman, a frank, guileless, manly disposition. His splendid fortune allowed him to follow the natural bent of his generous temper. He was very frequently staying for weeks at his cousin's, where he was ever welcome, his well-filled purse making him such to Mr. Harcourt, and his temper and society endearing him to Ellen.

When she was eighteen Charles Harcourt found, in the usual language of lovers, that his happiness depended upon her becoming his wife, and he frankly told her so. She as frankly confessed her attachment to himself, but at the same time reminded him of her promise to her mother, that she would never leave her brothers whilst they required her assistance.

“ My dear Ellen,” said he, “ I have told you a thousand times you make yourself a perfect slave to those boys ; they ought to have gone to school long ago. I shall speak to Mr. Harcourt on the subject.”

"It will be quite useless," said Ellen, sighing at many a remembered indignity.

"He says he cannot pay for their schooling,"

"Then I will," said Charles Harcourt, "and they shall be started next week; we will be married the week after. Our home can be theirs, and my Ellen shall be as happy as love and wealth can make her."

"Do not be too sanguine, dear Charles," she answered, "I am afraid those poor boys are too delicate to be sent to school; indeed I am sometimes very uneasy about Edward."

Charles dropped the hand he held, and looking doubtfully at the sorrowful girl, said,

"Ellen, do you really love me, or are you making these excuses to prevent your fulfilling your promise of becoming my wife?"

"Do not doubt my affection for you, dear Charles," returned Ellen, "but at present my duty is here. Mr. Harcourt is almost always from home, and I am afraid deeply in debt."

"I cannot, in justice to myself, do more for him!" said Charles. "He gambles to a frightful extent. If I do anything it must


be for those unhappy cross children, and what can we do better than give them a home with us?"

Ellen looked at him affectionately as she said :—

"This is not the first time I gain a glimpse of your generous kind heart, but I have a duty to fulfill to you as well as to the children. Were I your wife my time and attention ought not to be divided from you. In the present state of their delicate health it would be so ; perhaps in a year or two."

"No !" said Charles impetuously. "I see your love for me is not so ardent as I hoped. A divided love I could not bear. I will not press you, Ellen, Be happy with those you love, and do not let a thought of me draw you from the duties you have chosen."

Had he glanced at Ellen's tearful eyes and quivering lip, he had again been at her side ; but that jealousy of affection so inherent in man was fixing its evil influence on his actions, and he rushed from the room



angry with himself, Ellen, and all the world. But this was only another episode in her life of early trial. One more link in the chain of endurance which was to purify her in her path of woman's duty. Poor Ellen !

Charles little knew how much she suffered by his hasty conduct. He knew not her real life of slavery. How little thought that generous-hearted young man, as he spent day after day in luxurious ease, that the woman he loved, toiled, hungry and weary, either at her needle or pencil, to gain money to purchase food for herself and little brothers. Little dreamed he in his mountain tour that Ellen, his still beloved one, whom he would have shielded from every discomfort, was actually performing a menial's work for her mother's children—that their father had left England to avoid his enraged creditors—that everything had been sold, and Ellen in a sordid lodging was tending the death-bed of the youngest child. And where did this

young girl find strength of mind and body to support her in this fresh trial ?

She poured out her wants and her sufferings at the throne of Him who doeth all things wisely who smiteth not but to heal.

Dear Ellen, I always thought her wrong not to have written to us in her distress, but she nobly fulfilled her duties, and it was only when the eldest boy was given over that she wrote to her uncle. He instantly went to her ; but as the boys had died from fever she would not come to Moresdale until she had been for some weeks by the sea-side.

Nothing was heard of Mr. Harcourt for some years, and then by accident his cousin found that he had died a few years after his sons at Paris, in a state of depraved poverty.

But Ellen once amongst us, our endeavour was to make up, by our united tenderness, for the sorrowful years of her girlhood.

The companionship of a friend so well calculated for it as Ellen Trevor was a great

delight to Florence, and they were never a day without meeting for many months. Their mornings were passed at the cottage, in music and singing, or at the doctor's in drawing and reading.

Ellen was the very reverse of my mirth-loving Florence, who with her golden curls and laughing blue eyes enticed you to merriment. Ellen, on the contrary, was tall and dignified, with large pensive grey eyes, and those peculiar long, black eyelashes, with the under lid so fringed that you often mistake the eyes for black, but on the rising of the drooping lid there were the thoughtful, pensive grey eyes, truthful and kind. The grave expression of her countenance became her well, but her meditative moods were often disturbed by Florence with her merry laugh and almost childish gaiety, which it was impossible to withstand. When the musical laugh of my darling roused her from one of her serious reminiscences all the light of that lovely countenance lit up with a loving

tranquil smile. I know no word which can express the whole bearing of her character and general appearance, save endurance and repose.

Mdlle. la Fayette frequently joined us and added not a little to the pleasure of that tranquil summer.

Charles Harcourt did not write, in fact he seemed to have forgotten Ellen's existence, and we knew not anything of his proceedings, after hearing that he had gone on the continent.

What confidence the girls reposed in each other I know not, most likely by bits and scraps the past of each was told to the other.

From the time Fanny had married my dear brother and sailed for the fatal shores of India, I never had had a familiar friend. My past was a dream known only to myself and that dear father who was now no more for earthly converse.

Yes ! one other knew in part, the bitter past, though as yet we had never dwelt upon

the subject in our friendly chats. Ah ! well, it is not bitter now. I look back on the past and trace His hand who doeth all things right. Link after link my chain of life I trace, and marvel at their wondrous fittings. How brightly now shines forth the link which grieved me so ; how dull the one which once so glittering played amid my onward path. I bow my head and say, Thy ways are right !

I do not think I have said much of Mrs. Maitland, perhaps because she was the only one who now knew of the bitter disappointment of my girlish days.

She had lived in the service of the Clinricardes from a girl. Her boast was that she had lived sixty odd years in his lordship's family.

As Florence said, I know not which was the whitest, her hands, her hair, or her handkerchief. She was the neatest, the prettiest, and the kindest old lady I have ever seen. She had held sway at the castle so long that she was known in the parish as

madam, or the old lady at the castle, or the kind lady, or the good lady ; but I certainly never heard her spoken of without some appellation which told of her being beloved and respected.

It was to see Mrs. Maitland, and, as my merry Florence said, to have a secret gossip with my favourite, that I started one lovely autumn afternoon to walk to the castle.

I had intended to go alone, but encountering on my way the pleasant trio, as Dr. Stanely had named Florence and her two friends, I invited them to accompany me.

Mdlle. la Fayette had never been there, and with the graceful ease of her countrywomen acknowledged the pleasure she should feel in making an acquaintance with Mrs. Maitland and being allowed to ramble over the stately old building.

" I have often," said she " climbed some distant hill that I might look upon the ancient ruins of its abbey, and the noble woods which surround the castle. They

bring to my remembrance the homes of my native land. Ah! beautiful France! shall I never more visit thee!" Then turning to Florence, she said in a more lively tone :—
" There must be some secret chambers, or a Blue Beard's closet! A stately castle like this must have its mysteries!"

" I will show you all the wonders;" said Florence, " the tapestry chamber where the spirits are seen, and the parapet from which they take their flight to regions unknown; and I will actually try to inveigle Mrs. Maitland into entrusting me with the key of the picture gallery."

" Pray do so!" said Mdlle. la Fayette.
" Nothing delights me more than spending a few hours amid these specimens of the genius of man."

" Which do you admire most," asked Ellen, " the imaginative genius, or the imitator?"

" If you mean the portrait painter," answered Mdlle. la Fayette, " by your imitator,

I must say the imaginative, for generally the portraits we suspend in their splendid frames are not half so interesting as the style of the carved gilding which surrounds them."

"I partly agree with you ;" I said, "but we should feel more interest in viewing them did we know something of the private history of those they represent."

"You are right," answered Mdlle. la Fayette, "for even the likeness of a plain person we have a regard for obtains an interest with us in viewing it."

"Have the Clinricardes been an enterprising race?" asked Mdlle. la Fayette, after we had walked for some little distance in silence.

I looked at Florence with a smile.

"My dear little aunt Maude," said she, turning to Mdlle. la Fayette, "knows I am rather learned in the adventures of the past generations of the Clinricarde family."

"And the present?" asked Mdlle. la Fayette.

Florence shook her head, looking mysteriously perplexed.

"I assure you," she said, "I should feel grateful to any one who would enlighten me on the history of the present earl. No one knows, or won't know, or dare not know anything of him, past, present, or future.

"Of the future very likely not," said Ellen, "and I think Mrs. Maitland knows far more than she likes to tell."

Wishing to change the conversation from the present possessor of the castle, I drew their attention to the scenery, which here was particularly beautiful.

We had reached my father's favourite trout-stream, to which we had so often rambled with him; each tree, or each mossy bank; each rocky seat, seemed to bring back the vision of the dear departed one: here had we lingered to watch some evening sunset; there had we sat in meditative mood, watching the mist in softening beauty rise, and ah! how often had I seen him lean

over the rustic bridge to feed the expecting trout. But no remembrance of him ever pained me ; he walked this earth as a path-way to his better home.

It was a pleasant distance from the Old Parsonage, and as we stood on the rustic bridge around which the green moss clung in numerous varied tints, my thoughts dwelt with soft repose on the memory of many a solemn conversation we had held together on the same quiet spot. Solemn ! but not gloomy ! It was a bright, sparkling stream, peeping out here and there ; now gleaming through some thick tangled brushwood ; now laving and dipping the bending bulrushes or feathery grasses which grew on the streamlet's banks ; now dancing brightly in the full light of the evening sun ; which shone on its white pebbles and moss-covered stones. Away through Farmer Rudson's upland fields it seeks the quiet shadow of the alder copse. Here it becomes deeper and wider from its numerous little tributaries,

and silently pursues its way until it joins the river and is borne far, far off to the bosom of the wild ocean.

In some places the bending trees met over its broken banks, dipping their quivering sprays into its waters as though paying their graceful homage to the Naidés of the stream.


'Tis here the bright mid-day sun can only pierce with a soft light through these ancient trees. And here in the deep pools beneath the overhanging banks revel swarms of bright and lively trout, darting with a sudden leap amid tufts of water-lilies and other streamlet roots, or chasing each other in many a mazy round. This stream was known for miles, and many eager anglers did my father encounter in his musing rambles, and many a short-timed acquaintance did make—short, though pleasant—for this was the time when hospitality was the fashion of the day ; when crime was heard of in great and crowded cities, but when it se'dom crept amid

thatched cottages, or invaded our rural and unprotected walks. Not only did the indolent angler visit this quiet and unpretending spot, but many a truant schoolboy and nut-loving maiden.

The sweetest nuts were found in the thickets around.

Ah! many a gladsome and happy party of young men and maidens came for miles to enjoy a nutting scramble. Those were the days when maidens wore dresses not easily torn, and the youths were more active, or knew how to climb trees with greater skill. However that might be, none could enjoy a September day's nutting more than the Moresdale youngsters.

By taking a winding path through these said nutting bushes, we came to a steep acclivity, indeed they were called the rocks, and to those accustomed to scramble it was the pleasantest way to the castle. When we had gained the heights what a splendid prospect burst suddenly on our sight.



Away, far in the distance lay the stately ocean, but not too far to see in the full radiance of the setting sun the wild waves dancing and casting their white foam on the broken cliffs, and in a still evening the roar of the dashing breakers would be borne on the air to the castle rocks, on which we stood. And there in that fertile valley rose the stately castle, with its abbey ruins in decaying beauty around. It rose on a magnificent slope, whose terraces of gardens reached almost to the noble river which flowed through the extensive park.

We gazed long in unbroken silence. At length Mdlle. La Fayette exclaimed in her pretty foreign accents :—" Ah ! what a lordly scene ; it puts me in remembrance of my own *La belle France*. Surely the possessor of this lovely spot must be the happiest of the happy ?"

" If happiness depends on the beauty of his possessions, he must," said Ellen ; " but I have a faint remembrance of hearing a

village gossip speak far differently of the present lord."

I sighed without being conscious of having given this expression to my feelings.


"You must have known the present family, dear Miss Middleton," said Mdlle. La Fayette, "do tell us something of them of their characters I mean."

"The subject is painful to me," I answered, "for of my dear friend the Lady Julia, I have only a sad, very sad history to relate, and of her brother, the present lord—it would be worse than sad." I was leaning on the arm of Mdlle. when I spoke thus mournfully, for my heart was filled with the images of gone-by days. She pressed my arm tenderly in hers, and unconsciously I looked up into those fawn-like eyes. There was a lovely tenderness in their expression, and I felt—yes I knew—I had betrayed my secret. Not a word passed between us; but she entered into a lively conversation with the two girls, thus taking off their attention from

me, and from the subject which had so pained me. From that hour, a feeling of affection and confidence arose between us, and we felt when the time came, we should each have a history of feelings and trials to relate, and we might demand, and receive sympathy unthought of before.

We descended by a well-known path between the trees and brushwood, and crossing the river by a light elegant bridge, entered our "home park," as Florence persisted in calling that part, which in former times was kept in such order, that it had almost the appearance of an immense lawn: now some farmer's sheep were grazing on the sweet grass. They gazed inquiringly at the intruders, with their large, patient, melancholy eyes, and a few moved lazily off to a distant slope.

Mrs. Maitland saw us from her pleasant look out on the Southern Terrace, and came to meet us. She had heard much of Mdlle. La Fayette from Florence, and paid her



great attention. Middle. on her part, seemed charmed with our friend, and chatted with her native vivacity, indeed I do not think I ever saw her to greater advantage. She expressed a wish to view the Castle some day, and Mrs. Maitland instantly invited her to come the first day she could command.

“ I must have the whole party,” said she, “ a long, long, day ; and we will dine in the park, that will just please Miss Florence.”

“ Miss Florence never accepts your invitations,” said my saucy girl, giving her a kiss at the same time.

“ Florence will, I am sure,” returned Mrs. Maitland, smiling, and returning the dear girl’s salute, “ When will you come ?” I named an early day, and proposed their visiting the gallery, whilst I sat to rest myself, and to have a little quiet chat with her. They had not been absent more than half an hour, when I heard the fleet step of my Florence rapidly approaching ; her paleness as she entered rather alarmed us ; and we

both started from our seats with the same exclamation :—

“ Are you ill, Florence ?”

“ It is poor Mdlle. La Fayette,” she answered, “ she has fainted !”

Mrs. Maitland, without stopping to make further inquiries, followed us instantly with some restoratives. We found the poor French lady in the picture-gallery; Ellen was supporting her head on her lap, as she lay extended on the floor, where she had suddenly fallen. She was still in a state of insensibility; but soon began to revive, under Mrs. Maitland’s judicious care.

Before she was fully sensible, her eyes wandered around her, and became fixed on the portrait of the present earl. “ Ah ! Mon Dieu !” she exclaimed, passing her trembling hand over her eyes, “ where am I ?”

“ With kind friends,” I said softly. She turned quickly at the sound of my voice, and spoke rapidly in her native language. So rapidly and energetically that I could not

follow her meaning. I met Mrs. Maitland's glance; it was most kind and anxious. I understood her questioning, but shook my head in reply. I found the past had lost much of its bitterness.

"You have walked too far, Mdlla." I said, as the girls led her to a seat. She did not answer me, but sighed deeply.

"Let me order a bed to be prepared for Mdlla. La Fayette," said Mrs. Maitland, "it is impossible she can return to the Manor House this evening."

"Ah! you English are so kind," she answered, "and I am so trembling;" and again she glanced at the picture. I, too, looked in the same direction. It represented Lord Clinricarde about to mount his horse: he was drest in a hunting costume; it was well done, and the figure it represented was tall and commanding; the face was handsome and winning in the extreme. I remembered well its being painted; he was just twenty; and his sister Julia, who was

eight years younger—was taken at the same time.

“Who is it?” asked Mdlle., for she perceived my attention was also fixed on the picture.

“The present Lord Clinricarde,” I answered. She grasped my arm, and her head fell on my shoulder. She did not faint again; but I felt her tears falling on my neck. I motioned the girls to leave us, which they did, accompanied by Mrs. Maitland, on whose countenance I perceived a look of painful meaning. Finding we were alone, she raised her head, saying suddenly, and with startling energy :—“We have both loved that man!” I had completely lost my presence of mind, and I felt my burning cheeks betrayed the secret of gone-by years.


“Sister,” she said passionately, “he is my betrayer; the murderer of my happiness the father of my child—my noble, good Louis—do not despise me,” for I had

unconsciously started from her side—‘D o not despise me ; I was young, Oh ! so young. Fatherless ! motherless ! They were *noblesse* of France, they both died for their sovereigns, and he, he, made a false marriage with me !

“ I thought myself his wife ; I never thought to doubt his honour—and now, my love is turned to hate ! Ah ! no ! no ! ” she exclaimed, suddenly falling on her knees before his picture, and extending her hands towards it :—

“ Oh Henri, Henri, I feel I love you ! Yes, mon dieu, forgive me ! I love him still.”

There was deep silence in that lone dim gallery ; so still that I could hear her deep breathings as she pressed her trembling hands upon her heart. She tried to stifle her emotion. Her head was bare ; her long black hair had fallen in rich masses around her, and her tears, ah ! how heavily they fell before the picture of that bad man. I could not resist my womanly feeling of tender sympathy ; I



stole silently and knelt at her side. With a little grateful cry she threw her arms around my neck.

Yes ! there in that dim light, in that lone spot, before the picture of the man we both had loved, we wept in silence ; how long I know not, for we were aroused by the voice of kind Mrs. Maitland.

Her voice had something of surprised and pained emotion in it, as she uttered the words

“ Miss Maude !”

We both started to our feet.

Her countenance unbent as I said :—

“ My kind old friend, you know the history of my heart—it has been a painful one—but poor Mdlle’s. has been still more sorrowful.”

“ These strong emotions will kill you, my dear Miss Maude !” she answered. “ Sam has been for Dr. Stanely’s `chaise, and then you can ride home. Mdlle. la Fayette had better remain here.”

Mdlle. looked wistfully at me.

I answered her look by saying,

“ If you require a friend you may safely place confidence in my friend, Mrs. Maitland, and indeed you had better remain here to-morrow—Florence will take your place at her aunt’s—and we will walk over for you in the evening.”


Mrs. Maitland kindly pressed her to do so, and she thankfully accepted the proposal.

CHAPTER XII.

Know we what the morrow bringeth,
Hope, and joys, or cares for us !
Oh ! it is a blessed knowledge
That hath hid the future thus.
If the future were not veiled
All had been a life bewailed.

FLORENCE fulfilled my promise to Mdlle. la Fayette by walking over to the Manor House early enough to be in the schoolroom for giving the lessons, for we had called there the evening before to account for the non-appearance of Mdlle.

Florence was to solicit her aunt in Mrs Maitland's name for a half-holiday, and further to invite the whole Manor House party to accompany her to the castle to feast on strawberries and cream.




The girls had just returned to school, I remember after the summer vacation, which was not so long then as I am told they are now ; I was to have an early dinner and meet them in Farmer Woodford's copse-field. But first I went to pay the farmer a visit, and carry off my favourite Sunbeam, the farmer's merry grand-daughter.

I am rather before my story. I must go back a few years and tell you the history of Sunbeam.

As I now sit and look out upon the green fields, the beautiful and graceful trees ; as I listen to the wild trilling of innumerable birds, and the soft cheery hum of the passing bee, I think how blessed is my lot, cast amid scenes I so deeply love.

I have always pitied those who are obliged to live in the dull dirty city. I have thought on them when the morning breeze has played so lovingly on my face. I have pictured the dirty streets, the closed windows, the brown and weary-looking flowers, which seem pining



for country breezes and refreshing showers. I have thought of the poor dirty little sparrows, and wondered what charm they could find in the begrimed morsels which they pick up in the dusty streets ; I have pitied those condemned to live in the close sulky city, when the evening sunset has burnished hill, wood, and stream ; when the purple banners float on in majestic grandeur, mixing with the crimson glow, or rest hid beneath the snowy clouds, wreathed with the grey of coming twilight. But I have pitied them mostly when I have lingered in the sweet-scented hay-field during a breezy evening ; when the sounds come softened o'er the dewy green sward, refreshing by its soothing stillness the weary labourer ; when even the drowsy cattle turn their faces towards the scented breeze, and the placid waters of the little lake tremble as the soft balmy wind skims over her bosom.


On such an evening my Florence, then a little child, wandered with me down to Farmer

Woodford's home field, and as may be supposed from the title—near to the farm—it was one of the most extensive farms in the county, and had been in the Woodford family for many generations.

Farmer Woodford was considered a wealthy man; but he was called also a hard man, not but what he was a just man; he paid well, and he would have his work done well.

So far, so right!

Whilst his wife lived he had been more tender—this was the village term—he was now only just! They got nothing more than their wages from the wealthy farmer. He was respected, but no one loved him. He certainly had had great trials—as my father said, heart trials! Trials soften the sincere heart-feeling Christian, but too often hardens the careless ones. His wife, the loved wife of his youth, after a few years of severe suffering, was taken from amongst them—the hearth of her home knew her no more;




and that home seemed to him lonely and desolate ; he shunned all his former friends, We never saw him at church, and if my father endeavoured to lead him into conversation on the subject, he generally walked away, giving him such a look of hopeless meaning that his heart ached for him and as he said, " I can only pray for him."

Many were the prayers my dear father breathed in secret for those who would not pray for themselves. His wife had left him two young children, but they could not fill the void in his heart.

The girl followed her mother when she was sixteen, of the same complaint—a lingering decline. She bore up bravely at first, trying to comfort her father and brother, who mourned sadly the thought of losing his constant friend and playfellow.


Richard Woodford was two years younger than his sister, and he attended upon her with all the tenderness of a girl.



Although the farmer would not listen to my father, he ever made him welcome in his visits to his daughter, whose patience and earnest devotion cheered my dear father in many of his own sorrowful moments, and often in after years has he spoken of her sweet, simple, child-like faith, deep humility, and fervent love.

Richard was a high-spirited, warm-hearted youth. A mother's tenderness might have done anything with his affectionate disposition, for even his young sister led him from many a thoughtless prank.

My father thought the farmer was too strict with him, and he was often violent and reproachful in his language to him. Many men are so to their sons, although they make the tenderest parents to their daughters. Unfortunately for them all, five years after the death of Mary-Anne, a party of gipsies encamped in a wood belonging to Farmer Woodford.



Richard, as most of the young people did, frequently visited them, and became attached to one of the gipsies.

She was a very beautiful girl, and most certainly as modest as she was handsome. This acquaintance became known to his father, who of course could not approve of it—unfortunately he gave full vent to his temper. He violently reproached his son, and at length went so far as to stigmatize the young gipsy girl, in a manner she did not deserve. A most distressing scene ensued between the father and son, which ended in Richard's declaring he would make Dora his wife. On the instant his father spurned him from his home, and they parted with bitter anger in both their hearts.

To the sorrow of all who knew the youth, he appeared no more in the village; and in a few days, the gipsy encampment disappeared also. An open war had been carried on for some time between them and the farmer, in

every petty way, dislike on both sides could suggest. The Farmer became more and more iron-like both in voice and manner ; and more and more aged and saddened. His black locks had become white—his vigorous step, slow and restless—and his voice when not angry, sad, very sad ! My father often met him lingering in the churchyard, and though he always turned from the spot, yet he knew it was his wife's grave he had been to look upon. He was a great favourite of my father's, as opposites often become firm friends and companions. They had each lost their dearest and best, they had each felt the same desolation in their homes. True, my father had a child left to him in his old age and he had sought, and found comfort where comfort in affliction alone can be found.

Seven years after Richard's flight from his home found little Florence and I wandering in Farmer Woodford's home-field.

It was the last day for carrying ; it had been what the villagers call a wonderful fine crop !

As we approached the field the merry voices of the haymakers came cheerily upon the breeze.

We stood leaning over the stile looking upon the scene.

A truly English picture !

A troop of lads and lasses followed in succession, raking up the last line, which lay thick and fragrant along the large field ; others were following the waggon, collecting the scattered hay which it left in its progress. All busy, all merrily joking, laughing, singing or talking.

The beautiful horses of the farmer—and he was allowed to have the most splendid in the parish—were moving lazily along, frequently fed in their progress by a fairy-looking child, with sun-burnt skin and long streaming jet-black curls. She seemed the

very essence of sprightliness—Here ! there ! everywhere ! Now stooping under the heads of the horses collecting handfulls of scattered hay to regale them—creeping beneath them and appearing on the other side with shouts of laughter, as the sagacious animals turned their heads to look after her, as they slowly munched the dainty morsels she had provided for them.

The farmer was standing leaning on his stout ash stick watching her antics.

We walked towards him.

“ Good evening, Farmer Woodford.”

He turned round quickly as I spoke.

“ Ah ! Miss Maude ! how is your father ? I wish he had come down with you.”

“ He has promised to follow us !” I returned.

“ I am heartily glad of that, Miss Maude. We missed him sadly last summer, when he was too ill to come amongst us ; but you are looking brave, Miss Maude, and so is Miss Florence.”

"Do you not think she grows like my dear brother?" I asked.

"More and more every day, Miss Maude. Your poor father felt his loss terribly."

"He did indeed!" said I.

"He had one child left to comfort him, and a good child she is, Miss Maude."

I could see Farmer Woodford was thinking of his absent son.

"We have had a lovely summer," I remarked, trying to win him to cheerfulness, "and this haymaking time has so many charms for me."

"We have had a beautiful summer, indeed, and the wind has been so fresh that the hay is remarkably sweet this year."

"You seem to have plenty of hands, farmer. Have you not some strangers amongst you?"

"Three or four, Miss Maude, three or four! but they don't work like our villagers! Sturdy lads, Miss Maude! sturdy lads! our Moresdale boys."

" Yes! they are good lads, farmer, and I hope you have a word of praise for our lasses, too."

" Why, yes! they are good lasses, I must own, and merry ones! Give me a Moresdale lass for a song, or a dance either!" and the farmer laughed, a most rare thing for him.

" Hollo! you young mischief!" he shouted, shaking his stick at the little girl I had noticed. " Hollo! come here you good-for-naught. You shall be shut up in the barn, you torment. A dainty meal you'll make for the rats."

But here the farmer's rough voice sunk into a softened tone, as the child who had fallen under the very feet of the fore horse of the team came bounding towards him. Her large lustrous black eyes raised confidently to his; her little ill-clad feet in constant motion carrying her round and round the farmer, who still playfully threatened her with his huge stick.

" Why, how now, merry mischief! did

old Jack want to eat you for his supper that he knocked you down between his legs, or were you rolling about for his amusement?"

"Old Jack didn't knock me down; he's a good old horse, and I'm not hurt," shouted the still dancing child.

"And who'd care if you were?" returned the farmer.

"You would!" said the little girl, gently approaching him, and taking his large hand she tried to draw his arm round her neck as he bent down and again threatened her with his stick. "You were very sorry when I fell off the stile yesterday."

"Well!" said the farmer, patting her rosy cheek, "you certainly are as full of mischief as an egg's full of meat."

"There's no meat in an egg!" said the child, jumping and clapping her little hands. The farmer laughed.

"And where's that lazy father of yours?"

"He's not lazy;" answered the child, boldly, "father's never lazy."

“ Then what’s he doing sleeping under the great oak yonder ?”

“ Father’s ill,” she answered, all her mirth gone in an instant.

Caught, I suppose, by the kind face of Florence, she sidled up to her saying :—

“ Father’s sorry. He’s often sorry.”

“ Sorry ! how do you know he’s sorry ?” I asked.

“ Why I saw him crying just now,” she answered, the large tears starting into her own eyes at the recollection.

“ Then why did you come away ?” asked Florence.

“ Oh ! I was behind the tree ! He didn’t see me. Father does’nt like me to see him cry—but I’ll go to him now !” and off she bounded to the old oak, beneath which we now perceived the figure of a man, leaning his back against the tree, as he wearily reclined on the green sward.

“ Whose child is that ?” I asked, turning to the farmer.

He had been watching the retreating figure with a smile upon his iron visage, but it vanished as he answered.

“ Really I do not know, Miss Maude.”

“ She is a pretty child,” I remarked.

“ I think the brat has bewitched me. I can’t take my eyes off her !” laughed the farmer.

“ Does her father reside in the parish. I do not remember seeing her before, and I ought to know all my father’s parishioners.”

“ And so I believe you do, Miss Maude, man, woman, and child. You are not called his reverence’s curate for nothing. I see you often enough, and hear of you, too, wherever care or sickness is.”

I returned his good-humoured smile, for I well knew the title bestowed upon me by my loving friends in Moresdale.

My father’s health had become so delicate during the last few years, I had taken on myself many of his duties in the way of visiting rather than have a stranger amongst us.

"Then this poor man is a stranger, here?" I asked,

"He has been here about a week. Jobson, at whose cottage he is lodging, asked me to employ him. He seems rather lame, and has, I believe, been very ill."

"Did Jobson tell you so?"

"Yes! I know nothing more of him, Jobson had the child with him when he came to speak to me, and would you believe it? the little puss had a bunch of flowers in her hand—I was sitting down on the bank yonder—and while I was talking to Jobson she fastened them into the button-hole of my coat."

"Poor little creature!" I said. "I will talk to my father about them." We must try and do something for the poor man, for he is a stranger, and ill."

We were strangely deficient at Moresdale in enquiring about people's characters when they were in want. We used to do the best we could for them and enquire afterwards. I

can't think why people are so very much more badly disposed now to what they were then. My nephew told me when I made the remark to him, that there were more newspapers now, and consequently we heard more of crime. If that's the liberty of the press, I wish they would restrain it a little."

"That will be the best plan, Miss Maude," said Farmer Woodford, replying to my offer of speaking to my father. "I have a little cottage I would let the man have for a time. I really think he is too ill to do much work."

"How old is he?" I asked.

"I do not know;" returned the farmer. "I have not spoken to him; I avoid seeing him working, for I am certain he does not do a quarter of a day's work, and I must keep up my character for stern justice, Miss Maude."

Poor man, I thought, how your heart is yearning to bestow all its buried tenderness on that little child.

"'Tis a strange wild bit of a child;"

said he, turning round and looking wistfully in my face.

"She seems very pleased at the notice you take of her."

"That's true, Miss Maude, she seems to take to me strangely, and she isn't a bit afraid of me or my stick."

And you could see the good man really enjoyed the idea of this little creature setting him and his huge stick at defiance.

"I have taken quite a fancy to the child, that's the truth, Miss Maude, for she puts me in mind of——"

And here the farmer turned away, looking so sad and heart-sick that I guessed in an instant that what had touched me had made an impression on him.

I followed him with an impulse I could not resist, and laying my hand on his arm, I said

"This little girl puts you in mind of your son when he was a child."

He turned quickly round, tears were

gathered in his eyes, and his massive features worked convulsively.

“ She does ! she does, Miss Maude !
'Twas this look which took hold of my heart from the moment the poor little thing laid down her head on my knee when I was sitting on the bank out yonder ; 'twas just like Richard when he was her age, just the way he would fondle my great hand and pull it down upon his curly locks.”

Strange as it may seem, I had never spoken with Farmer Woodford on the subject of his son, but it did not occur to me then.

“ There is certainly a likeness, or we should not both have been struck with it !” I said. “ Did you ever hear whether Richard married the girl ?”

“ Oh ! Miss Maude ! if I could only be sure of that, be sure they are not living a life of sin, and that I, his own father, had been the means of driving him into it ; 'tis this thought, Miss Maude, is crushing my aching heart ; 'tis this has made my hair

white before its time, and bent my frame before age has touched me !”

“ Do not believe it, my friend, I cannot for one moment think Richard is living such a life ; they may be poor. My father, I know, thinks Richard married Dora, and perhaps joined the gang. He always thought she was a good, modest girl, though a gipsy, and he had a high opinion of Richard.”

“ There ’tis, Miss Maude ! I outraged the girl’s character by my cruel taunts, and I may have led my poor boy to doubt her, too ; I may have driven my child to sin, as I drove him from his home.”

“ Have you ever heard from him ?” I asked, after a pause, during which the farmer had been endeavouring to obtain command over his excited feelings.

“ No, never !” he answered. “ I did not try to trace him for more than two years, and then all clue to his wandering was lost.”

“ It is four or five years since, is it not ?”

“More than seven! more than seven!”
he answered dejectedly.

He groaned as he turned away and struck his stick deep into the turf. I knew not how to give him comfort, and turned to look at the group under the old oak, for Florence had wandered off and joined them.

I was walking towards them when we were startled by a shrill cry from the little girl. Such a cry of childish anguish I trust I shall never hear again. She came rushing towards us, followed by Florence. Her face, which had been so joyous only a short time before, was now fearfully excited by terror. Laying hold of my dress she tried to drag me towards the tree, passionately crying—

“Come! come! Father is dying, he’s dying!”

I then perceived some drops of blood upon her dress and neck.

Much alarmed we hastened to the poor man’s assistance.

Extended on the ground lay the insensible body of her father. Evidently he had broken a blood vessel. Kneeling on the ground, I raised his head on my arm. His hat fell off; his long fair hair was blown by the passing breeze from off his brow; his poor pale thin face was now fully exposed to our view. I started and looked at the farmer, who at this instant came to my side. One glance was sufficient. The old man cast himself upon the ground and clasped the senseless body to his breast, and in the emphatic language of Scripture lifted up his voice and cried—

“My son! my son! Would to God I had died for thee!”

CHAPTER XIII.

" Let us be patient ; these severe afflictions,
Not from the ground arise ;
But often times celestial benedictions,
Assume this dark disguise.

" We see but dimly through the mists and vapours,
Amidst these earthly damps ;
What seems to us but sad funereal tapers,
May be heaven's distant lamps.

" There is no death, what seems so, is transition ;
This life of mortal breath,
Is but a suburb of the life elysium,
Whose portal we call death."

A WEEK afterwards, Florence and I accompanied my father to Sunnybrow—the name of Woodford's farm.

Richard had been very anxious to see us, but until now, our good Doctor Stanely would not allow of any visitors.

Almost as white as the snowy linen by which he was surrounded—his large blue

eyes of an unearthly brightness—his lips crimson from consuming fever—a too beautiful tinge on his otherwise colourless cheek, propped up by pillows—lay the once handsome, vigorous, Richard Woodford. His father sat on one side of the bed, occasionally moving his pillows, or performing some loving office, with all of woman's gentle tenderness.

We had wished to have little Dora with us at the parsonage; but no entreaties, no temptation, could keep the child an instant from her father. In that room, she flitted noiselessly about, her eye constantly watching him; and she seemed to know his wants even before he was aware of them himself. Her bright beauty—her winning frankness, and fond caressing manner, well deserved the name her grandfather had bestowed upon her.

“Sunbeam!”

There sat the little Sunbeam, perched on the foot of the bed, apparently making a

wreath of wild flowers, but, in fact, silently watching her father's every look and action, and as Florence said—"the wonder was how she got on and off the bed without disturbing the sick and drowsy man, even in his slightest slumbers.

Richard was not allowed to speak, scarcely to move, as the least excitement brought on the fearful cough. We therefore entertained him with accounts of all that had transpired in the parish, during his absence, tempting him with some of my father's finest fruits.

My father prayed by his side, and the old man knelt by the bed, his face buried in his hands; and I saw Richard's thin trembling fingers nestled in his white hair, as he would do when he was a little child sitting on his father's knee. As we left the room, I turned to take one more look. Sunbeam had nestled in her grandfather's breast—Richard's hand lay in the gentle

grasp of his father's, and the two were gazing in each other's faces.

Yes, life is short for such holy love! But there is a brighter, and a better land, where there shall be no more partings—An eternity, where such love shall be happier, purer, holier.

Our poor invalid lingered on through that fine autumn, and on some of the mild October days, ventured out leaning on his father's arm.

The old man would not listen to any of Doctor Stanely's hints, that his son's days were indeed drawing to a close. He would not perceive his increasing debility; but talked of what they would do in the spring, consulted my father and the doctor on change of climate; insisted that his increasing weakness was owing to a bad night, his consuming cough, to too much fatigue.

At length, Richard said he must try and break to him his own conviction, that his

last hour was drawing near. My father remained in the house on the evening Richard felt able to speak to him.

He had much revived during that day, and this false sign of amendment did not pass unnoticed by the farmer. My father engaged the attention of Sunbeam in the parlour, and the two were left alone. What passed between them, we never knew.

The old man left his son's room, aged by many more years in strength and spirit than when he entered it. My father met him at the bottom of the stairs—he wrung his hand hard as he passed, and went alone into his fields. Sorrowfully, my father gazed after the stricken man; but he felt it were better he should be alone in his first agony. Richard was resigned—more, he was happy. My father rejoiced in his sincere contrition; his steadfast faith, his peaceful hope.

He had related to him, at intervals, the events of the last few years, saying that he


had heard the full particulars of his trials ; but out of love to his father, he had suppressed many of them in his recital to him.

He had married Dora immediately on his leaving Moresdale. They had taken a cottage in Wales, where he went out as a labourer. After some time, he was employed on a gentleman's farm as a kind of steward. This was the happiest time of their married lives, until their eldest child was drowned whilst playing near the river.

This preyed much on Dora's mind—she fancied herself to blame for having left him alone in the field from which he had strayed.

In a few months afterwards his little girl was born. Poor Dora lingered on till her child was nearly two years old, then Richard found himself alone in the world with a helpless babe to provide for.

He gave up his situation, and rambled about, getting work when, and where he could, nursing and attending to his little Dora himself.



Oh! how bitterly he reproached himself for his undutiful conduct to his father, his seemed all the fault; and his heart yearned to return to his home, place his baby in his father's arms, and die.

After three years of this sad wild life, he came to the resolution of returning to Moresdale: he knew he had not long to live, and Oh! how he longed to be forgiven, to see his father once more. He arrived in the midst of the breezy hay-time. Ah! how pleasant were the sights and sounds of his home.

He made himself known to Jobson, the head man on the farm, who was only too glad to receive his young master and make him comfortable at his humble cottage.

Richard's hopes and wishes of a reconciliation with his father seemed almost fulfilled when Jobson related the notice he had taken of little Dora.

Fearless though gentle, healthy and gay she made friends wherever she went; and

she soon became the general favourite in the hay-field. Little did they think, she was the child of their regretted young master, who had been so universally beloved in the village.

Richard's end was peaceful; he laid his head on his father's breast to sleep with Sunbeam's little hand in his. He slept on earth; but he awoke in heaven!

Farmer Woodford is still alive; a hale old man. Sunbeam after a time, seemed to renew his health and spirits. They come constantly to church. He now leans on her arm. His hair is white as snow—her's as black as jet.

The young farmers are beginning to call Sunbeam very handsome; and many an admiring glance is stealthily given to the heiress of Sunnybrow. But Sunbeam is only seventeen, and she is in no hurry to be married. Not she indeed!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE evening breeze is whispering,
So joyful too it seems,
It speaks to memory of the past,
And many pleasant dreams.

Oh ! it tells of friends departed,
Of age that's laid to rest,
Of trials that are over,
And heaven's happy blest.

That evening breeze how welcome,
As it plays upon my brow,
For age is creeping on,
And I am happy now.

I WAS so engrossed with the remembrance of the past, that I have almost forgotten our walk to the Castle ; and my intention of calling for Farmer Woodford's bright-eyed granddaughter, but call I did, and found, as was always the case, a hearty welcome.

The Farmer was sitting smoking a pipe

in his large arm chair in the arbour; and Sunbeam sitting on the corner, evidently trying to coax the old man out of something he pretended to be unwilling to let her have. I had often been witness to scenes of the same kind, and been amused at the Farmer's evident delight in Sunbeam's pretended disdain at his sudden freak of stinginess.

On seeing me, the Farmer threw down his pipe—rubbed his hands, and called out in great glee:—

“ Ah! Ah! there's Miss Maude: she'll take my side of the question, I know! Stay—stay, you baggage, no bribery,” as Sunbeam ran and threw her arms round my neck, and gave me her accustomed kiss,—“ What's all this, Farmer?” said I.

“ Ah! Ah!” he laughed, “ that changeable fairy wants a riding dress with hat and feathers, forsooth! when the other day, nothing could make her mount the old mare.”

“Is that the case, Sunbeam?” I asked. She nodded saucily, bestowed another kiss upon me, and at the very least, half a dozen on her grandfather. The old man laughed heartily, and said “I’ll tell all about it.” She only clapped her little brown hand on his mouth, making signs with the other, of woeful punishment. “Well, well, go your way,” said the old man, “I suppose you must have them.” He was rewarded by what he called “a precious good hug.”

Sunbeam was quite delighted at my having come to take her to join the party from the Manor House, for of course the heiress of Farmer Woodford had been educated there; a good English education, dancing being the only accomplishment he had her taught; for our favourite was already very expert in her dairy duties, and did not disdain some of its labours, although of course, she had plenty of help for the rough parts.

Farmer Woodford walked across the home

field with us, telling his granddaughter at parting to keep a good look out that she was not galloped over. She threatened the old man with her finger, and a thought crossed my mind—what joke is this.

Our way lay across two fields of the Farmer's into one of those long lanes with steep banks over-hung with old trees and brushwood.

As we proceeded we occasionally heard the low muttering sound that an angry bull will make, but being used to these country sounds they did not even interrupt Sunbeam's laugh or my rambling chat. The sounds at last became louder and nearer, and we both stopped to listen.

"I hope it is not Farmer Lyddon's bull," I said.

Sunbeam caught my arm.

"Oh! Miss Maude, what's that?"

A loud shout came on the air—"Back, back for your lives."

Our presence of mind was lost. I could

not even remember the nearest stile; but almost at the same moment a young man leaped his horse over the bank, a little way above where we were standing, sprung from its back, and without a word seized on Sunbeam and actually slung her up to the top of the bank; she caught the branch of a tree, or would have fallen back into the lane. He sprang up, dragging me with him. We were scarcely in safety when the enraged animal came in sight. It was maddened as it made fruitless attempts to reach us.

Sunbeam had contrived to scramble into the body of an old oak, from whence she called on us to join her. It was well we did, for from the animal's repeated attacks with horn and hoof, the bank on which we had stood, began in parts to crumble and fall.

I must own to being much alarmed—not so my companions; they, I think, seemed rather to enjoy the novelty of our situation—when to my no small joy we heard the

shouts of some men in the direction of Farmer Lyddon's.

Several men with picks and sticks at length succeeded in turning the animal from the spot, but he was found to be so vicious that they were obliged to shoot him.

Our descent was performed with more decorum, and we warmly thanked our preserver. He was a stranger to me, but I found my companions were known to each other.

Of this I was certain when we once more stood in the lane, and he said in answer to my thanks,

“It was fortunate I was on my way to Mr. Woodford's as I saw your danger from the mound” pointing to an elevated spot two fields from the lane. “I had been watching the beast for some time, fearing from its antics it was bent on mischief. As soon as I saw you in the lane I hastened down and am thankful I was in time. Will you allow me to escort you, there is still some danger

in your path ; which way were you going ?”

“ To the castle !” said Sunbeam.

“ Ah ! there is a river there, you may fall in.”

“ And you will be there to dive for us,” said she, laughing.

He returned her merry look, and turning to me bowed and asked permission to accompany us.

Sunbeam immediately said

“ I beg your pardon, dear Miss Maude, but this gentleman is Mr. Lyddon’s cousin.”

I remembered having heard Farmer Lyddon speaking of a sister’s son who wished to purchase a farm in our neighbourhood, which was in the market. He had been down here last summer, when Florence and I were from home.

“ I shall be most happy,” says I, “ if Dora will inform me of your name.”

“ Mr. Leigh,” said Sunbeam, blushing.

“ Frank Leigh, at your service !” said

the gentleman, taking off his hat in gallant style.

"I remember your mother quite well, Mr. Leigh;" I answered. "She is well, I hope."

"Quite well, and anxious to return to her own county."

"You intend settling here!"

"That depends upon circumstances, over which I am afraid I have little control."

I was looking at him when he said this, and I saw him bend a look on Sunbeam, much at variance with the tone of his voice.

We had been walking on during our conversation. He had gathered her two or three wild flowers from the bank where we had found refuge, the leaves of which she was unconsciously plucking off; her head was bent down, but I could detect a vivid blush upon her sunburnt cheek.

Oh: oh! thought I, am I ever to be the confident of foolish lovers—I remembered too the riding dress—if grandfather is in

the secret all's right—so pretending to be both deaf and blind—a most fortunate failing when in the company of lovers—I looked away over the stile we were to mount.

In those days, stiles were not considered so terrific as they are now. The gentleman generally cleared them at a bound; and turning sideways the lady mounted, and placing her hand on his shoulder, sprang lightly on the ground.

I was over the first after Frank Leigh and demurely sauntered forward; and on their joining me, I saw more flowers in the hand of Sunbeam, and there was a happy triumphant expression in the tones of Frank Leigh's voice that was quite infectious. Oh! youth, youth, happy and glorious time! if the fear of God, and the love of mankind is before your eyes. Ah! and in the pulses of your heart too.

A pleasant walk we had, and we met the Manor House party at the appointed spot, and Mr. Frank Leigh had to be introduced

to the whole party, and very pleasant he made himself, for he contrived to be generally attentive without neglecting or being solicitous about his lady love, for that Sunbeam was such there was no doubt, at least to the perceptions of such lover detectors as Aunt Maude.

We found a delicious repast of strawberries and cream prepared for us, of which we partook, and then under the protection of our only beau, who was not a little proud of the office, the young people set off to ramble about till tea-time. I found Mdle. La Fayette looking pale, but she professed to be quite recovered, and able to return with us. I noticed a kind of confidential manner between her and Mrs. Maitland, and there was a dignified ease about Mdle. La Fayette which I had not noticed before. On parting, she gave her hand to Mrs. Maitland, and after the pause of a moment, bent forward and kissed her.

A flush rose on the old lady's pale cheek,

and she raised Mdle's. hand to her lips with a fervent "God bless you."

I pondered on this all the way home, and so deeply was I absorbed in my restless thoughts and surmises, that much to the merriment of the whole party I placed my hand on the arm of Frank Leigh, by whom I chanced to be walking, and commenced a speech in a most confidential tone, addressing him as,—“My dear Doctor Stanely do tell me!”

“My dear Aunt Maude,” said the young man, laughing heartily, “I will tell you anything,” and thus ended our pleasant ramble to the Castle of the Clinricardes.

CHAPTER XV.

I love a little mystery,
It makes the heart beat fast;
And we ponder of the present,
And ponder on the past.

Two days after our excursions to partake of Mrs. Maitland's strawberries and cream, she came over to the Manor House, to see Mdlle. La Fayette. They were closeted together for some time, when Mrs. Maitland set off, walking very fast to Doctor Stanely's cottage. Mdlle. La Fayette, in a very agitated state requested an interview with Miss Butler, and much to her surprise and dismay, she informed her she had that morning had some intelligence which would oblige her instantly to return to France.

“ For how long are we to be deprived of

you, my dear?" said Miss Butler, recovering her usual calm dignity, which she told me in confidence when relating the events of the morning, she had nearly been deprived of—so much had Mdlle. taken her by surprise.

"How long are we to be deprived of you my dear."

"Perhaps, circumstances may prevent me resuming my duties," replied Mdlle. ; "but in that case, I will send you some one who will fully supply my place."

"That never can be," said Miss Butler, bursting into tears ; "for we all love you." Mdlle. was deeply affected ; she might have expected tears from Miss Dora, but from Miss Butler !

Poor Mdlle. ! she was quite overcome, and as Miss Dora who had been sent for out of the school-room said, "they never had had such a scene," and when Doctor Stanely came in a post-chaise, and they all three started off together, the consternation

was so great that the sisters were obliged to give the girls a holiday, and walk over to tell me the whole particulars. We were shortly joined by Ellen, as much bewildered as we were. "But your uncle, my dear," I exclaimed, "what does he say?"

"He only bid me send for Mortone, if he were wanted, and said he would write as soon as they reached Paris."

"Paris!" we all exclaimed: and then came a silence so long, we each seemed afraid to break the spell. But when we did, everyone spoke together, indeed, we were so excited that we felt not a little ashamed of ourselves, when we became calm. But we were all the same in our folly, and I was glad when Florence the sly little thing, proposed an early tea to set us to rights.

The events of the next few weeks were so marvellous and so hurried, I can scarcely recall them as they passed in quick startling succession before us.

Florence, as you may easily guess, again went daily to the Manor House to assist her aunts; and Ellen came to be my companion. Four days past before the promised letter came from the doctor. No news regarding his hasty elopement with Mdlle La Fayette, and Mrs. Maitland. He hoped he had not been wanted professionally—they were quite well—he would write again soon.

Really men are very deficient in letter writing. A woman's letter is worth twenty of the formal, business-like letters of a man, even now, I seem to feel the same annoyance that letter gave us all. It was addressed to me, and it was no sooner read than Florence and Ellen started off to the Manor House to show the contents there, for we had one great comfort at Moresdale, an early letter delivery. But two days after came another from our good friend. Lord Clinricarde was dead!

What had they to do with Lord Clinricarde? Never shall I forget our surmises,

our wonderings. In the midst of which, up I started. "The picture!" I exclaimed. I believe they thought me mad! Florence came up quite soothingly. "My darling aunt," she said; "you want quiet; this excitement will never do for you." She kissed me tenderly; and had I not caught sight of Miss Dora's countenance, of a lived terror as she took up the breakfast bowl to throw the contents over me, all would have been well; but this had such an effect upon me, that I went off into peals of laughter that nothing but my Florence's tears could stay. At length I forced myself to behave with more propriety, for in truth, the struggle I had had not to betray myself on hearing of the death of one, who had been once only too dear to me, had helped the nervous feeling which had ended in hysteric laughter.

After Miss Dora had relinquished the breakfast bowl, and was convinced I was not going insane, I mentioned Mdlle. La

Fayette's emotion on seeing the earl's picture. That she must have known him, was very evident. But still all was mystery.

Doctor Stanely did not return until another week had passed, and then he came accompanied by the new earl and Mrs. Maitland.

I had always understood that if the late earl died without an heir, his cousin would succeed him in his estates and the title would be extinct; he was nearly as old as Lord Clinricarde, and a most unamiable man.

I must own to my thoughts wandering with a most unchristian-like feeling to the thought of any intimacy with the new family, either for Florence or myself.

Many a gossip's remark came unbidden to my mind, and I had actually worked myself into a fit of nervous irritability, when late in the evening our good old friend paid us a visit.

On my mentioning my fears to him he

said I was quite mistaken, as the present earl was quite a young man, and that he fully expected that Ellen and Florence would soon be pulling caps for him.

Florence tossed her saucy head and assured the doctor—I thought rather sadly—that she never intended to marry.

Ellen sighed and smiled.

My thoughts would fly back to the past. Yes, my youth returned to me in dreamy fancies. I sat musing, silent and abstracted; Dr. Stanely fidgetted about, pulling Florence's long curls, knocked down my balls of cotton, and in his haste to prevent my stooping to pick them up, pulled out the needles from my knitting.

The two girls laughed at our old friend's dismay, who looked up quickly as the garden-gate fell back with what Florence called an impetuous bang.

A quick manly step was heard on the gravel. Florence turned very pale, and the doctor uttered something about young fools

and impatience. The door opened and Louis Darville entered.

“ Ah! there’s the Earl of Clinricarde, and make much of him, young ladies,” exclaimed the doctor.

I only remember that Louis kissed me, although his glance was on Florence.

My Florence met that glance of truthful fondness and fainted. The surprise was too much for her, and her secret was betrayed. Louis caught her as she was falling, and we all felt he had a right to lay that dear head on his breast as he bore her to the couch.

She soon revived, but if he had read the story of her love, his was revealed in the gentle though fond kiss he impressesed on her brow as he resigned her to my arms.

Ah ! Louis, you have become very, very dear to me.

But my explanations demand another chapter.

No one thought of asking for or giving

any that evening. Indeed it was too late, and we were all so excited. Dr. Stanely ordered us to our rooms, and Louis to his home. At this he made a little grimace

“ So lonely, my dear doctor ? ”

“ Well, then, come back with us. Ellen, can he have his room ? ”

“ In ten minutes after our return ! ” she answered.

He ran back after they reached the gate.

“ May I breakfast here, Aunt Maude ? ” he asked with pretended humility.

“ Yes, and welcome. ”

Really, Louis, your joy had made you impertinent. He gave me a hug and Florence a kiss, and ran after his friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

Memory! thou dost strangely bring the past, and
Blend it with the present! E'en as I pause, visions
Of gone-by days float in strange order o'er
My sightful mind—some feelings glow with all
The ardency of a first impression!
And scene on scene is acted o'er again!
Others how wondrous cool!

 Methinks I hear loved
Voices stealing on my ear, and forms now
Mouldering in the dust glide 'fore mine eye,
And cheat my fond affection.

 Oh! mind thou
Wondrous gift! the past, the present, and
The future are thy own. I envy not
The sordid sons of earth who hold thee not;
Possessing thee! I have a mine of wealth
The world can not deprive me of.

THE late Earl of Clinricarde and his sister
were mine and my brother's earliest friends.
Lady Julia, who was some years younger
than her brother, married young, but made
an unfortunate choice. She died early, and
did not leave any family.

Her brother !

Yes ! I will speak very briefly of him.

We were engaged with the consent of our families when I was only seventeen ; he was ten years my senior. I believe that at that time he loved me very sincerely, and he was very dear to me. I never loved again. My life has had one bliss, one agony. We were to have been married in two years. During that time he was to travel on the continent, accompanied by a Mr. Douglass, a college friend of my father's. This was his mother's wish. His father had been dead some years. At the end of that time he returned an altered character. Mr. Douglass considered he ought to make my father acquainted with it ; yes ! I must write the hated word—*his vices*.

My father softened the account to the countess, but alas ! it plunged her into a grief from which her delicate health did not allow her to rally.

Our separation took place, and I never saw him again.

He returned once to the castle, but we were not at the parsonage. It was then he decoyed poor Lizzie from her peaceful home.

It was at the commencement of the revolution that he was in Paris, and was the means of rescuing from death the young daughter of the Count de Marseil. Her whole family fell either by the hateful guillotine or died in prison, and but for Lord Clinricarde the young Adala would have fallen a victim to the fury of the populace.

He married her, and carried her in safety from Paris.

“ And ne’er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Niade, or a grace
Of finer form or lovelier face !”

They were married by an English clergyman, and Adala, who had been brought up in the Protestant faith, became in all form his wife, although he had not intended making the marriage so binding, as he fancied she was a Roman Catholic.

A few months after their marriage he told her what he believed was the truth, that their union was not binding, that their marriage was illegal.

Adala was too young and uninformed to understand that their being of the same faith had made their union legal, and he left her in anguish and shame, to return to England and meet me at the altar.

Poor young creature, she found a kind friend in Madame Dubois. They had been educated in the same convent together, and they met accidentally after she had been so cruelly abandoned. Madame Dubois was just married, and listened with the deepest interest to her history.

Their affectionate attachment was renewed. Aadla remained her guest till Louis was born.

General Dubois made every inquiry for her husband, for such she now understood he was by law.

Louis was brought up by the General

who bestowed on him every advantage wealth could give. Adela assumed the name of Mdlle. La Fayette, and supported herself by fancy works in which she excelled.

Poor Adala ! she had not ceased to love the father of her child ; and hearing that an English gentleman was dangerously ill in the village where she resided, she attended upon him, disguised as a sister of Charity.

The medical men wondered at the anxious care with which she watched night after night at the sick man's couch. They little thought it was the forsaken wife who thus nursed him. Doctor Stanely, who had been appointed one of the guardians to his father's will, was sent for. His skill and knowledge of the earl's constitution were shown in his recovery, and his attentions to Adala, most likely saved her from a severe illness.

His suspicions were aroused, and with his usual kind roughness, he questioned the

attentive nurse. Poor Adala, only too thankful for such a friend, confided to him her sad history. She could not tell the name of the clergyman who had married them, or the church, and Doctor Stanely could only promise to watch his opportunity of gaining a confession from the earl. He thought it the most prudent plan to leave Adala still in ignorance of his rank. As soon as the earl's delirium was abated, the Doctor persuaded her to leave him, but to remain in the house, hoping some moments might arrive for introducing the subject to her husband. But all his efforts were vain, the earl persisted in denying a marriage. Doctor Stanely remained with him until he could be removed; and then poor Adala was again alone. Shortly after this, she unfortunately attracted the attention of a Count de la Tour, who was partly insane, from the loss of his wife, who met with a fearful death in his presence. Adala was exceedingly like her, and to avoid him,

she accepted a situation in Miss Butler's School. By some means, the Count obtained a clue to her residence, and came to England several times—but the strict seclusion in which she lived, baffled his attempts to see her. In his last visit, unfortunately, he encountered Louis who had come to England for the first time, to visit his mother. From his foreign air and accent the Count fancied that he was some lover of his wife's with whom she had left her home and country. In the madness of the moment, he fired, and wounded his supposed rival. Louis had recognized the Count, and on his return to France, he made some enquiries, and found that his friends had placed the unfortunate man in security.

Lord Clinricarde for many years had led a life of dissipation, and when laid on his bed of death, conscience would be heard. In his agony of remorse, he sent for an English clergyman who chanced to be in the neighbourhood. This gentleman proved to be

the one who had united him to Adala. He made an ample confession to him, acknowledging her as his wife, but he was not aware she had given birth to a son.

By his request, this gentleman wrote to Mrs. Maitland, desiring she would come instantly to Paris.

Adala had communicated her history to her, after finding by the sight of Lord Clinricarde's picture, that he was her husband.

On hearing from Mrs. Maitland of the earl's dangerous state, she decided on accompanying her and Doctor Stanely to France. Soon after their arrival, the Doctor gently made known to the earl the birth of his son.

He received the communication with the greatest surprise and delight, and earnestly entreated his friend to obtain for him the forgiveness of his injured wife.

Louis was sent for, and the dying man had the satisfaction of receiving their

sincere forgiveness. His death afflicted the countess so deeply, that she was unable to accompany her son and Dr. Stanely to England. They were to return for her as soon after the funeral as the numerous duties of the young earl would permit. Most affectionate were the attentions bestowed by the amiable countess on all those who had been kind to Madlle. de la Fayette, and the noble castle once more became the scene of hospitality.

The surrounding families vied with each other in attentions to the young earl and his mother. Our Louis might have chosen from amongst the fairest and the noblest in the land; but as his mother once said to me—his selection had been made.

CHAPTER XVII.

May with its lightness !
May with its brightness !
How welcome and joyous it seems,
May with its flowers !
May with its bowers !
All decked for a poet's wild dreams.

“ The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brighter when it dawns from fears ;
The rose is sweetest wash'd with morning dew,
And love is loveliest, when embalm'd in tears.”

It was on the twenty-second of May, when three young brides, the best, and the loveliest girls in the county, were led by their handsome bridegrooms from our beautiful old church, they passed down between two lines of our village maidens, who strewed flowers in their path, wet with pearls of morning dew. They, blushing, fluttering with happiness, looking shyly up, thanking them with smiles.

Had they been able to command their voices, they could not have been heard, for the old bells sent forth such clamorous peals of joyous sounds, that the rooks, scared from their nests amid the lofty old trees of the castle woods, rose cawing their wild cries to the echo of the marriage peal. Florence, Ellen, and Sunbeam, were the happy brides.


I had forgotten to say that cousin Charles Harcourt had returned to his allegiance, and Sunbeam had accepted Frank Leigh, who had purchased a farm in our parish.

Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt, after travelling abroad for nearly two years, returned to England with the full conviction that there was no place like their dear native land. They rented a pretty place about five miles from Moresdale, and our dear Doctor Stanely was so constantly with them, that we declared he had forsaken the Moresdale

people, and given us up to his partner Mr. Moretone.

Our three young couples have had their trials and hours of grief; but I must say they are happy in themselves, and this, I think is, in a great measure, owing to the young wives making home the pleasantest place to their husbands, entering into their pleasures and pursuits, as much as consistent with their other duties.

My nephew, Lord Clinricarde, has the real interest of his people at heart—religious and moral—and he paid my Florence the highest compliment he could, for on their wedding day, he placed in her hands a deed, which proved to be an endowment for six poor widows from our parish. Dear Florence, how delighted she was; and how busy they were after their return from their marriage tour, in drawing plans, giving orders, &c., &c., for the building of six cottages; and very pretty they were, and a



nice bit of garden to each of them. No sooner were they built, than Sunbeam and Ellen were consulting me, whether Lord Clinricarde would permit their husbands to join in endowing and building a seventh.

I knew Louis's good kind heart too well, not to be certain that he would rejoice in such an instance of right feeling in the young couples.

No sooner had I told him of the wishes of the Leighs and Harcourts, than he went off to call upon them, and express the pleasure it would give him in complying with their request. It really is delightful to witness how Louis is beloved by rich and poor—and his mother too, she has always lived with them.


My Florence doats on her Louis's mother, and when she found that she really consented to reside with them, she had the picture of the late lord removed from the picture-gallery, and placed in the Countess's room. But I am rambling on, as though every one cared for their doings as I do.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD MANOR HOUSE.

In truth it was a strange old place,
That dwelling of a noble race,
For many a knight of high degree,
Famed in the list of chivalry,
Was noted on the bannered wall ;
And helms and spears bedecked that hall,
And many a story deftly told,
Could that old cabinet unfold,
In letters stained and worn with age,
Writ by some learned priestly sage
Or lady to her absent knight,
When wars had called him from her sight.

ON looking over my manuscript, I find at the commencement a promise unfulfilled—a tale of the Old Manor House. In truth, I have not been particular in relating my reminiscences ; but have rambled on, regardless of dates. But a promise must not be disre-



garded : the greatest difficulty is to choose the most interesting from the many legends belonging to the Old Manor House. I do not remember much of the family, for I was but a child when the last branch departed from their old home for the sunny lands of Italy ; but I have heard my father speak of the last family who dwelt there.

I remember, too, that our farewell dance (when leaving school for the vacations), was always in the long gallery where still hang many of the family pictures. One in particular always had a charm or fascination for me ; it was that of a young girl, her golden hair hung in rich thick curls below her waist : the wind had blown a long tress across her shoulder, which she was holding back with one fair tapered hand, whilst from the other were falling some wild flowers, which you might suppose she had been gathering, for the scene lay in a wild wood, on the banks of a river. Her countenance was of the Madonna style ; the expression

so tender, so enduring ; I know of no other word which could convey the impression I used to receive of that young girl, as I would stand and gaze on her likeness. Her large soft brown eyes were intently fixed on the figure of a youth in the distance, who, dressed in a hunting suit, appeared to be mounting his horse. The expression of his handsome face could not be mistaken. He was the young girl's lover.

From my father, I heard much of Mortimer Clinton and his cousin Lucy ; but much more from my old nurse, who had lived in the family when she was a girl, and I believe had been somewhat of a humble friend and companion to the orphan Lucy in their childish days.

Lucy's mother was the sister of Mr. Clinton : she was married young to a man of immense wealth, but nurse Perry would say :—" Ah ! my dear young lady had her eyes of grief from her mother, whose heart was sad enough for all her riches, better

have married a poorer man and been happy." Truly the simple in their simplicity speak many a truthful sentiment.

My father and the two cousins were very intimate, as boys and girls generally are, when of the same class in society, and living in the same village. Before Lucy was sixteen, and Mortimer little more than eighteen, they were declared lovers. Many thought the heiress's large fortune was the cause of her uncle's anxiety that his son should choose her for his wife, he certainly tried to hurry on the match, but Mortimer, who had been accustomed to have his will and pleasure without restraint, now, most likely from perversity, insisted on travelling for two years on the continent. This of course was kept from the knowledge of Lucy; at least his reluctance to an immediate marriage. My father was an unwilling confidant of both father and son.

I rather think from some words he unguardedly let fall in conversing with me once

on the subject, that his opinion of Mortimer's principles, even in their youthful days, was not very favourable. His regard and esteem for Lucy was fervent. Her kindness of heart, and sweet gentle temper, endeared her to every one who knew her, and many in the village wished that Miss Lucy's affections had not been fixed on her cousin.

Many a blushing maiden would hasten away from the green copse, or forest glade, rather than meet the young squire alone.

And many a manly villager would frown, as he noticed the gay glance of the youth follow the form of some pretty damsel, who might not perhaps, object to meet his look of admiration, as she tripped past him.

Mr. Clinton wished my father to accompany his son on his tour, but this, for many reasons, he objected to, and Mortimer departed with a companion much his senior in years, and as it afterwards proved, his more than equal in extravagance, and love of pleasure.

At first he wrote frequently, and with all the ardency of a lover quitting for the first time the object of his affection.

From an old cabinet found in the lumber-room, I one day drew forth a bundle of papers, which proved to be Mortimer's letters, written during his absence on this tour, and some poetry of Lucy's; the style of the verses were all plaintive, as though, even then, a presentiment of evil dwelt on her young heart. I traced a change in the style of the letters written after a few months' absence—then they became less frequent, one appeared to have been written after months of silence, and to have been in answer to some doubts expressed by her of the continuance of his affections. Poor Lucy! she had no mother, no friend, to warn and guard her!

Her uncle, who feared that her beauty and wealth might raise up rivals against his absent son, under pretence of his health failing, kept her in almost strict seclusion.

Her lonely life, and solitary wanderings in the gardens and surrounding wood, helped to increase the natural pensiveness of her character ; and a strange reserve of manner began to creep over her intercourse with her only companion and friend Mary Perry.

Once, she ventured to intrude on her stern guardian in his library ; and Mary, whom she had requested to wait for her in the adjoining room, could hear his voice raised in angry loudness. After nearly an hour, her dear young lady came forth, pale, trembling, and weeping. She fell, sobbing, into her humble friend's arms, but on hearing her uncle's step approaching the door, she sprang up, and flew up the stairs to her own room. This was only a few weeks before the arrival of her lover. She evidently doubted his affections ; but hers were most sincerely fixed on him. No wonder, then, that when on his return, he paid her the most devoted attentions—sought ever to be in her company, to meet her every wish,

and even to anticipate them—no wonder, then, that suspicion was lulled, and love awoke with greater ardency than ever.

Whether his affections had strayed or no, his love for her at this time was most sincere.

Her uncle had been left sole guardian to her person and property, which was the cause of her being married without any settlement of her property on herself.

Her request that they might pass some months abroad after their marriage, he kindly but most decidedly refused, and without a murmur, she acceded to his plan of a visit to an estate of hers in the Highlands of Scotland. They were both so much delighted with the surrounding scenery, that they remained there for more than a year, and it was there my father paid them his first and only visit.

The house was full of company, and my father soon found that gambling was carried on to a frightful extent, and he feared that

Lucy's large fortune had had sad inroads made upon it to pay her husband's losses.

Lucy was brightly happy, and only now and then my father perceived the sad expression stealing the brightness of love and joy from her beautiful eyes.

One of their visitors was a Count Bottoni. He was a dark, handsome man, but the expression of his countenance was of a most unpleasant character. He was a constant attendant on the steps of his young hostess, and my father could detect the nature of those advances which he wished, yet dared not take.

There was such a heart-glowing purity about Lucy

Which awed

The temper and bade freedom sit aloof.

My father thought he had never seen her to so much advantage.

Each courteous grace, each female art was hers,
To win the heart by virtue's gentlest sway,
You felt it not—that silken bond which bound
Your mind in thralldom—for when she sought to
Win your friendship to her captive chains, so
Sweet her converse flowed, that you would own 'twas
Woman's brightest charm—her gentleness.

Count Bottoni perceived that my father watched his proceedings, and at first used every engaging art to win upon his good opinion, but finding this of no avail he endeavoured to annoy him in every possible way.

This, too, my father decided upon not noticing, although it rendered his visit far from being so pleasant as it would otherwise have been.

One of Lucy's favourite walks was through a deep glen, on one side of which wild and broken rocks terminated on the sea-shore, the other was thickly wooded. About midway was a picturesque cave, which, as is generally the case in the Highlands of Scotland, had been the scene of some wild legend.

On the previous evening my father had expressed a wish to hear from Lucy the story attached to this mystic glen, and she invited him to accompany her to the spot, saying—

“ You will feel the truth of the story

more when you have the cleft rocks and the wild waves around you.

“It is on such an evening as this that the legend of the rival brothers should be related,” said Lucy as they entered the glen. Are not those clouds grand?” she said, pointing to some black masses slowly moving over the distant sky. “Yes! they are coming this way; the wind has shifted! they always meet me here. Stay,” she continued, holding my father’s arm to prevent his proceeding, “stay a few minutes, and they will pass over the glen; we will not meet them.”

“Your Highland home has made you superstitious!” answered my father. “I always thought it dangerous to cherish our love for the marvellous.”

She looked on him earnestly; a faint flush passed over her cheek. She appeared to be on the point of speaking of something that greatly excited her, but after the pause of a moment she said, half laughingly—

"Let us proceed; the clouds of my destiny have passed."

"Your spirits are depressed!" said my father. "Let us return, the glen really does look gloomy."

"No! no!" she answered, still trying to laugh away the subject, "you must learn the legend of my father's house, and in the spot where the last tragedy took place. I will own to you," she said, in answer to my father's solicitude, "that I have a feeling—a presentiment of some evil, of some crime!" Here her voice sank into a whisper. "Crime! yes, crime! connected with that wicked-looking Count Bottoni."

My father turned to look into her calm, pure eyes, and saw them fixed with a look of terror on the opening of the glen.

"Lucy! Mrs. Clinton!" he cried anxiously, for the paleness of her cheek and the contraction of her features alarmed him. "Speak! I see nothing to alarm you. Do not let us proceed."

She clung to him convulsively ; her eyes still strained with terror on the same spot. Gradually her features resumed their usual placid expression, but she still trembled from excitement. My father seated her on a piece of rock, and anxiously looked around for assistance, but not a human being was within sight or hearing.

“ Do not be alarmed,” she said, faintly, “ in a few minutes I shall be quite well. This is the second time I have seen it.”

“ Seen what ?” anxiously asked my father, almost fearing that her mind was affected.

“ I dare not tell you,” she answered, “ unless by the haunted cave of our lamented family. Yes !” she said in answer to his searching glance, “ I did not know until I came here that our family have the fatal gift of second sight.”

“ My dear Lucy ! can you possibly believe in such a gift as that ? Nonsense ! rouse yourself and let us return. I shall lecture

Mortimer for letting you wander about alone in these awe-inspiring glens."

"Do not joke," she said, "on a subject so solemn, but come with me to the cave; I have much to tell you, and it will be a relief to my heart, for you are a true friend to my husband, and I know I can trust you."

My father felt it would be useless to say more at the present time, they therefore proceeded and soon reached the spot they had come out to visit.

On passing a small grassy glade at the entrance of the glen Lucy trembled and clung to my father's arm. He glanced quickly around, but could not perceive aught living but themselves.

About half way down the glen they turned round a low rock and entered a spacious cave.

A cleft in the rocks opposite allowed the light to fall fully on the entrance, and he perceived it was light for some distance. Several pieces of rock lay scattered around,

and about twenty feet from the entrance he perceived a rising, which, on nearer inspection, appeared to be a rudely formed monument.

Lucy motioned him to seat himself on a piece of the rock near her, and after a few moments' silence, said—

“ You know I am a Glencairn, although my father changed his name to inherit his mother's brother's wealth. This estate was all that descended to him from his father. I knew nothing of his family history until some weeks after our arrival, when, one morning, I was accosted at the entrance to this glen by an aged woman of most strange appearance.

Her snow white hair was bound round with a piece of plaid, as she afterwards told me the plaid of our clan—an old cloak hung around her shrunken form, and I must own I started somewhat with alarm, as her shrill accents first caught my attention.

"Last of the Glencairns," she said, "welcome to this spot; I have watched to bid you welcome here!"

"Who are you?" I asked, "why have I not seen you at the Tower?"

"No," she said, "where I parted from my chieftain there, I felt I should meet his daughter."

"You knew my father?" I asked.

"I knew him," she exclaimed, raising her strangely shrill voice, "he was the child of my love; when he left, all became dark and lonely; with him the light was taken from my eyes, the joy from my heart, he was a Glencairn then, the first of his race who sold his name for wealth; but it will all vanish! all vanish with the last of the old race!"

"Who are you?" I again asked.

"Your father's foster-mother, young lady."

"His nurse?" I said.

"Yes, yes, I fed him from my own breast."

"I will not see my father's nurse want," I said; "come to me to-morrow morning, and I will give you whatever you desire."

"There spake the Glencairn," she said, exultingly, "Ah!" approaching nearer to me, and gazing earnestly in my face, "I see the shadow gathering around. I knew it, I knew it."

The last of her race, good, tender, and free,
A Glencairn like that, the future shall see,
When a dove meets the hawk in the clift of the rock,
The last of the Glencairns will sink 'neath that shock.

"I cannot describe to you" said Lucy, "the appearance of that aged woman, as she chanted forth this strange verse. Her face was lighted up with all the force of youth; she threw her arms frantically above her head, and as she again and again chanted forth her mystic lines, she appeared to my fancy to be some sybil of ancient times."

"Were you not afraid?" asked my fa-

ther, "surely you have acquainted your husband with this scene?"

"No," she answered sadly, "she bound me by the oath of our race, not to reveal to him that the curse of our doomed race had fallen upon me."

"Your doomed race!" exclaimed my father. "God can avert all spells from those who pray to him in sincerity and truth."

"He saves his own," she answered, "for the glories of the next world, not from our destiny in this." There was something so solemn, so beautifully enduring in her lovely resigned countenance as she raised her eyes confidently to heaven, that my father remained silent. "Doomed!" she almost whispered; "Doomed to bear the curse of my race! I possess the gift of second sight!" my father shuddered, for he felt certain that the lovely woman sitting by his side was a maniac. She understood his motion, and placed her hand on his

arm. "Do not fear that my reason has forsaken me, my mind is quite clear. Did you notice the lovely green glade at the entrance of the Glen?" My father remembered but too well, that it was there she appeared to be so fearfully excited, he however only replied indifferently :—

"Yes! I remarked, in passing, the lovely green of the grass in contrast to the two blasted trees."

"Ah! you noticed them," she said, "but you saw not the two bleeding bodies which lay beneath one."

"There was nothing there!" said my father, soothingly.

"Not to your sight! not to your sight!" she exclaimed. "To the doomed one alone are they permitted to appear."

"You have heard from some one a fearful story of sin and crime; it dwells too fixedly on your mind. I shall persuade Mortimer to bring you home to the Old

Manor House ; his father, too, seems to wish for your return."

"Is my uncle in low spirits?" asked Lucy, her affectionate heart taking instant alarm.

My father thought it best in any way truthfully to induce her to return to the Manor House ; he therefore dwelt more on Mr. Clinton's illness than he would otherwise have done.

Lucy replied she felt anxious to be with him, and should feel glad if my father would speak to her husband on the subject.

"How long have you invited your friends to remain?" asked my father.

"An indefinite time, I believe," she answered, "but of course if his father is ill and wishes for our society, our party must be broken up. I wish," she said, after a short silence, "you could induce Mortimer to give up the project of having Count Bottoni to live with us."

"To live with you?" said my father, astonished at the idea.

"Yes!" she returned. "I know not why, but I have a perfect terror of that man, and Mortimer seems to be under some spell in his attachment to him. You used to have great influence over my husband."

"I will do what I can!" remarked my father, absently, for on the instant some vague thoughts arose in his mind of a story connected with this Count Bottoni, which he had heard in Paris. Lucy noticed his abstraction, and my father caught her eyes regarding him wistfully.

"You know something to his disadvantage!" she said.

"Nothing certain," he returned "but I will watch him."

He rose to leave the cave, when suddenly there appeared at the entrance the most elfish form he had ever seen, that instantly Shakespeare's lines occurred to him.

"I conjure you by that which you profess,
(Howe'er you come to know it), answer me—
Though you untie the winds, and let them fight
Against the churches; though the yeasty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up;
Though bladed corn be lodg'd, and trees blown down;
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations: though the treasure
Of nature's germins tumble all together,
Even till distraction sicken—answer me
To what I ask you."

These lines flitted rapidly through my father's mind as they stood confronting each other, and he started back as though he had received a blow, when she said in a tone of decision.

"What would the soft southern gentleman ask of me?"

He turned his eyes involuntarily on Lucy.

"Her look composed and steady eye
Bespoke a matchless constancy;
And there she stood, so calm and pale,
That, but her breathing did not fail,
And motion slight of eye and head,
And of her bosom, warranted,
That neither sense or pulse she lacks,
You might have thought a form of wax
Wrought to the very life—was there,
So still she was, so pale, so fair."

“ Ah !” said Leana, for it was she. “ Ah ! the last of the Glencairns doubts me not !”

And she began to chant

The last of her race, good, tender, and free !
A Glencairn like that the future shall see ;
When a dove meets a hawk on the clift of the rock,
The last of the Glencairns will sink 'neath the shock !

After having chanted these lines in a shrill and unearthly voice, she whirled round and round with the most frightful rapidity, and then as suddenly stopping, she exclaimed—

“ Ah ! ah ! you have not heard what you came to hear—from whose lips should you hear it but from mine—ah ! ah ! I was but a babe when my mother laid me in his blood.”

“ Hush !” said Lucy, “ hush ! old woman, the evil one is upon you.”

The unfortunate woman's excitement instantly left her and she fell sobbing at her young lady's feet.

“ I pray for you, Leana,” said Lucy, “ but you must pray for yourself.”

“ I do ! I do ! thou pale Glencairn, I would stay thy doom, but I am powerless.”

“ We are all powerless in the hand of Him who rulest the universe,” said Lucy, “ but He cannot do wrong—I submit to His decrees. Up Leana, and tell my friend the legend of our house.”

“ The aged woman arose from her kneeling posture, and seating herself on a piece of rock commenced in a slow low tone, but which gradually grew into one of intense excitement, the “ Story of the Rival Brothers.”

CHAPTER XIX.

LEGEND OF THE RIVAL BROTHERS.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Shakespeare.

"Tis said that in that awful night
Remoter visions met his sight;
Such signs may learned clerks explain,
They pass the wit of simple swain."

Scott.

"It may not be! this dizzy trance.
Curse on yon base marauder's lance,
And doubly cursed my failing brand,
A sinful heart makes feeble hand."

Scott.


It was during the persecution of the early covenanters that the chief of Glencairn had set his affection on lovely Marion Lindsay, and although he knew she was the beloved of his young brother Norman he yet endea-

voured to entice her from her allegiance to her betrothed.

The father of Marion was a minister of the holy faith, and at this time the persecution raged so fiercely that the good man was obliged to leave his pretty manse and seek a hiding-place amid the wild fastnesses of his native mountains. Marion had accompanied him, and amid the crags and caves of Glencairn they rested securely, knowing that many a brave heart was beating for them, and that many an anxious eye watched over them.

Norman often stole to their hiding-place, but from some words which he overheard between the minister and his daughter, he fancied that they feared the chief knowing where they were concealed.

Norman was a brave, warm-hearted, unsuspicious youth ; he loved and admired his elder brother, and was quite blind to his failings. Their father and mother had died young, and left him, a child of four



years old, to the guardianship of his eldest brother.

Glencairn was almost twenty when his father died, and deeply felt his loss, and the departure of his next brother, who shortly after he came to the clanship sailed for India at the urgent request of their mother's brother, who had been there some years.

Norman had never before come into rivalry with his elder brother, and he now pondered and sorrowed over many little changes in that brother's temper and manners, which had before this only caused a moment's surprise. The idea of his love for his betrothed never for an instant gleamed on his mind, and after much troubled thought on the subject, he came to the conviction that Glencairn had entered into some plot which the spirit of the times was continually forcing on his countrymen.

Vainly had Glencairn endeavoured to find out the sheltered abode of the minister and

his daughter. He had attended several of the meetings when the aged man performed the sacred duties of his holy office, but Marion was not visible. Conscience withheld him from speaking to Norman on the subject; had he done so the open-hearted expostulations of his brother might have touched his better nature and turned him from his evil purpose. Unfortunately for all parties, he took into his confidence his foster-brother, Mark Lee, a man of vicious propensities and hardened heart. This man had had the audacity to view the daughter of the minister with an eye of passion, and even his duty to his chief, generally so binding amongst the clans, fell in comparison to his feelings of hatred and revenge.

Hatred and revenge !

Yes ! those were the feelings which urged on the traitor Mark.

Norman had once chastised his too great freedom of manner towards the young girl, but it had faded from his mind.

Not so Mark Lee! he waited but the opportunity of crushing all beneath one fell stroke. He cared not for chief, maiden—all, all, so that Norman's brave heart should burst beneath the stroke.

Had all his hairs been lives his great revenge
Had stomach for them all.

Glencairn had intended to order Mark to find out whither the minister had conveyed his daughter, but Mark did not quit his chief until he had artfully drawn from him that his affections were fixed on the betrothed of his brother.


The subtle villain soon perceived that at the present moment Glencairn would shrink from basely endeavouring to supplant his brother in the love of Marion. He hovered round the point of danger, each step bringing him nearer to the precipice of his own evil passions. But Mark Lee knew well how to turn those dark thoughts to advantage.

In his next interview with his chief, he

threw out a few hints against Norman, and knowing his love of popularity, led him to suppose his brother sought the affections of the clan for his own interest more than from love to him.

Glencairn's mind was in that state of godless excitement, that the Tempter found an easy entrance; and Mark Lee after a few more interviews, found no difficulty in working his chief's mind to his own purposes. His next attempt was upon Norman. Here he found more difficulty—he knew he would only listen to him if he spoke under the semblance of an honest purpose.

Regrets for the change in his beloved chief, sorrow for his own past conduct, and anxious expression for the safety of the minister. These were his leading topics, when, by apparent accident he encountered Norman. Had Glencairn known that Marion was already the wife of his brother, how different had been the sequel. One day, some months prior to the flight of the



minister and his daughter, Norman in pursuing some game, found the entrance to a large and airy cavern : it was so completely hid from observation by the surrounding crags, that he felt secure in being the only possessor of its existence. To this retreat he conveyed his wife and her father, when the soldiers were in pursuit of them. On further search they found two other caverns from the inside. From one of them they could gain the shore by climbing through a small aperture which opened on the rocks. Norman's faithful foster-brother was the only person let into the secret, as the minister always met his little congregation a mile from the spot, whence they were able to assemble for prayer. Mark felt certain that in the Glen was the minister's hiding-place. He had also several times tracked the steps of Norman ; but always lost him in the middle of the steep ascent.

A reward was offered for the apprehension of the aged minister, and Mark longed

for the stipend of guilt. The night on which he led the soldiers to their prey, was at first dark and gloomy; the wood was hidden by thick dense clouds, which however began to roll slowly and heavily along. His guilty heart beat almost audibly, as he guided the murderous party amid his native vallies: he almost repented of his deed, but it was too late. The betrayer is always an object of suspicion, and his flight would have been only the signal for his destruction.

Thus, they moved carefully and slowly amid the dark pine wood of Glencairn. Its chief restless and unhappy—suspicious of Norman, of Mark, and even of himself, was also a midnight wanderer. With folded arms he stands on a low clift commanding a view of the deep dark Glen. Suddenly the moon emerges from beneath the dense mass which had for so long obscured her silvery radiance, and shone with her pure calm light on two youthful forms standing

on the grassy glade beneath two stately pines. They are Norman and his bride Marion. At that moment he was informing her that all was arranged to bear her and her father away to a place of safety on the following night. His foster-brother Hugh, had a boat hidden amid the rocks, and ere the midnight moon should light their path of escape, he would be with her at the entrance of the cavern.

Ah! What is that? A shout, wild and prolonged, echoes amid the wild rocks and woods of Glencairn. The soldiers are rushing towards the green on which stand the hapless lovers. The chief had recognised his brother and Marion; and he too dashes forward claymore in hand, his own heart scarcely knowing whether as foe or friend on his own mother's son. The struggle was brief; no one knew how or by whom that tragedy was acted. When morning came, Hugh sought the cavern; but not a voice answered to his cautious signal.

Alarmed he hastened up the glade. What causes that fearful cry, that rush forward? Alas! beneath the blasted pine trees are four murdered forms. The brothers were covered with wounds, and Marion lay across the body of her husband, her breast had been pierced by a shot and terror appeared to have been the cause of the minister's death, as no wound was found on his body. The two trees were blasted and black as though struck by lightning. It was by his own confession, in after years, that the part Mark had played in the frightful tragedy became known. He wandered about for some years a raving maniac. Leana was his descendant, and my father thought, and most justly, that she had inherited the curse which had fallen upon her grandsire.

The second brother who had gone out to India, returned after a few years to become the chief of Glencairn, and from him the good and gentle Lucy had descended.

It was the belief of the clan, that when ever any calamity was to befall the race of Glencairn, the figures of the rival brothers were seen on the greensward of the little glen, lying just in the position in which they were found by Hugh Dugall. As my father and Lucy returned saddened by the relation of so much crime and sin, they stood for a few moments beneath the blasted trees.

“ Here !” said Lucy, shudderingly, “ here in this very spot I have seen the figures of two men.”

“ And in their Highland dress ! said my father, smiling, though sadly.

“ Do not laugh at me !” she returned, “ I am as certain I saw them as we are standing here, but a misty light was around them.”

The next morning my father wishing to give Mrs. Clinton a book she had expressed a desire to read, and which he had just procured for her, sought her in a pretty little summer-house which commanded a fine

view of the ocean. Here he knew she spent some hours every morning.

As he neared the spot he heard voices, and Lucy's raised much higher than he had ever heard it before, and he thought he recognized Count Bottoni's in reply. Surprised, he was going to withdraw, when the door opened and the count passed out without even seeing my father, his eyes being fixed on Lucy to the last as he walked a few steps backward from her presence. Her cheek was flushed to the brightest crimson; her eyes flashed, and her whole appearance was that of indignant anger. Seeing my father, she exclaimed—

“My friend, I must see my husband; that fiend has belied him.”

She passed him with a bound, and he watched her as she rushed up the avenue to the tower.

The rest was so fearfully sudden that my father's senses seemed bewildered by the quick succession of passing events.

It appears that Lucy's interview with her husband was brief. Her servant was summoned to her assistance ; she had fainted. She remained in this state for some hours, and her health was never fully re-established. Her vision, some said, proved true. Mr. Clinton and Count Bottoni fought under the blasted trees, and both were wounded almost to death.

On Clinton's recovery he went to Italy in the vain hope that change of scene would restore his beloved Lucy, but she lingered only a few months and died—my father said of a broken heart.

Before they left the shores of their native land he had a long interview with them. He never related what passed, but I found some lines in his writing which explains somewhat of it, and yet leaves it veiled in mystery.

LUCY.

She was a being, beautiful and mild ;
Her very step was gentleness ; her voice,
Tuned like the echoes of some distant song,
Came sweetly on the ear and sank into

The heart. I could not note the rich,
Deep beauty of that maiden's glance—the sad
Subduing look of those meek eyes—I could
Not, yet I see them now ; half timorous
Love would steal from 'neath the long dark lash
As though he feared to leave the deep recesses
Of her placid breast.

She was a being
Who lived on gentle tenderness—who dwelt
Enshrined by purity and goodness.
Sweet Lucy ! she clung with almost childish
Tremblings on affection's care—such was she.
But ere girlish beauty scarce had left her
Lovely form, how changed ! how faded ! she was
A bride, the wife of him she loved ; the partner
Of the being on whom she leaned for
Years of happiness—and he ! his was a
Form of manly beauty ; genius and love
Shone from his bright black eye, and winning flow'd
The varied accents of his mellow voice,
Yet 'mid his joyous moments there would come
A darkening gloom athwart his brow ! Only
An instant would it shadow there—some slight
Excuse would win her from enquiry, for
She deemed his words all truth ! his heart all love !
And so they were for her !

But like the fallen
One, who restless saw the bliss of Eden,
He himself forbade to enter—thus came
A subtle fiend in human shape ; he told
What made her young cheek pallid grow ! her pulse
To throb with quicker bound—then lifeless cease—
What whispered he ?

Of foul dishonour, which
Clung around the name of him, her young heart's idol.

She doubted fondly, trustingly,
She doubted—and she flew to ease her heart ;
Yet not by idle questioning, but fond
Confession of the tale thus told—

He listened !

Not with the frankness of an injured man,
But with the pallid lip ! the gasping sigh !
The clammy brow of trembling terror—yes !
'Twas true—no matter how, or when, or where—
Dishonour dwelt upon that loved one's name—
And she ? she could not cease to love—but now
Her idol robbed of half his charms, lay in
Her heart like death's cold grasp. *

She'd sit and gaze

Upon his brooding brow, and gently soothe
Him to a brief forgetfulness—it could
Not last, that soul's fell struggle—she spake not
Once of what she felt—she loved, and with a
Woman's tender fondness loved during life—
She died ere long—meekly she breathed her last
Upon his breast.

He thought she slept, and o'er

Her drooping form he hung, holding his breath
To still her gentle slumber.

Her form grew

Marble 'neath his tender hold, and then he
Started to the truth of agony—he !
Aye ! need I paint the rest ? Let those who love
Trace his despair !

